

February 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 Secretary

Deacons

Bert Hollander, Jennifer Wickman
Emilie Duffy, Cindy Rysewyk
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

Pastoral Leadership

Pastor Greg Braatz 02/01/2026

Gina Struensee 02/08/2026

Pastor Greg Braatz 02/15/2026

Pastor Greg Braatz 02/22/2026

Pastor's Corner – Greetings!

First comes Fat Tuesday with its Mardi Gras celebrations, puczki, and King Cakes. Then comes the seriousness of Ash Wednesday. It marks the beginning of the season of Lent, a forty-day journey of reflection, repentance, and renewal as we prepare for Easter. On this day, Christians gather to receive ashes on their foreheads in the shape of a cross, a visible reminder of our mortality and our deep need for God's grace. The ashes call us to think honestly about our lives, inviting us to turn away from what separates us from God and neighbor and to turn again toward love, justice, and mercy. Ash Wednesday sets a solemn but hopeful tone for Lent, grounding us in humility while pointing us toward transformation and new life in Christ.

While we won't be holding an Ash Wednesday service, there will be several in the community. I would encourage you to seek one and participate in this solemn practice.

Blessings- Pastor Greg

Birthdays and Anniversaries

February

Birthdays

Alissa Wickman
Carol Grose
Jason Martin
Elizabeth Bourassa
Priscilla Hermsen



Anniversaries

Jeff & Bobbi Mlnarik



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: **The family of Joan Nowak, To the family and friends of John Lane, To the family and friends of Earl Bauman**

General Prayers: Aaron, Barb, Debbie, Engrid, Steve, Mary Augustine, Kathy Bancroft, Bill Boesen, Joel Caulum, Margaret Dakins, Margret Drewry, Eugene Duffy, Mary Ellen, 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, Harlin Nowak, Paul O'Conner, Ron Palmer, Kyle Patrick, Judy Sanford, Ruth Saber, Jo Schulz, Cindy Shallow, **Donna Staidl**, April Steen, Sue Strandt, Jason Stewart, 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

February 1

Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	Polly Exferd
Greeter/Usher	Tammie McCarthy
Snack Provider	Michelle & Emilie
Hostess/Close	?

February 8

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

February 15

Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	Polly Exferd
Greeter/Usher	Tammie McCarthy
Snack Provider	Michelle McDowel
Hostess/Close	?

February 22

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

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 January 6, 2026

Households: 69

Adults: 133

Children: 61

The Pantry served the following January 20, 2026

Households: 70

Adults: 131

Children: 59

Your continued support is needed and appreciated – Thank you!

From Pastor Greg

At the annual meeting it was highlighted that we have a budget shortfall. One way to close the gap is to grow our church. Invite friends, neighbors, and relatives to join us on Sunday morning, especially with the Lenten season close at hand. Here are some suggestions for inviting someone to church:

- Ask open-ended questions: "Do you attend church anywhere?" or "Have you ever considered going to church?" can open up conversation.
- Share your positive experience: Talk about what you personally appreciate about church community and services.
- Offer to go with them: If they seem hesitant, suggest going together to ease any anxieties.
- Provide details: Clearly state the day, time, and location of the service.
- Be respectful of their decision: Don't pressure them if they decline but let them know the invitation is always open.

From Your Clerk of Session

Per Capita for 2026 is \$40.12 per member and is due by March 31st to Winnebago Presbytery.

This amount is used to support Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly, ensuring that all governing bodies can function effectively. Per capita covers the cost of operating these 3 separate entities, various committees, and commissions, along with funding the General Assembly Meeting. We have been very fortunate to have per capita help provide for us during our time of transition. Our session has supported this assessment as an appropriate way to assist in helping to meet the needs of our denomination. Please be considerate about getting your 2026 per capita paid on time. FPC Oconto will pay this amount regardless of whether you contribute \$40.12 or not but would be a great help to support our budget. Please note that per capita is separate from your usual donation or tithe.

Mission

We want to thank everyone for the wonderful support we received during last year. We were able to help families and other worthy causes. Please see below for a break down in the donations. In the next three months, in conjunction with "**Super Bowl of Caring**" we are focusing on hunger. We will be accepting donations for the **Abundant Life Homeless shelter in Menominee**, as they're in desperate need of meat to feed their residents. We are also accepting donations for **Feed My Starving Children**- a wonderful organization working to address hunger worldwide. Please prayerfully consider contributing to these worthy charities.

World Mission:

-Marion Medical Mission Wells-\$200.00

Regional Mission:

-Winnebago Presbytery Shared Mission Support-\$405.50 plus food and personal items.

-Oconto Shop with a Cop-\$417.00

-Oconto Presbyterian Church Youth Group Adopt a Family-\$919.00

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.

The annual congregational meeting was held on January 18th, 2026. If you would like to have a full copy of the Annual Report for 2025, please contact the office. Thank you!

HIGHLIGHTS OF WORSHIP

You may have noticed that I have made a few small adjustments to the worship service. I've run these past the Worship Committee and Session, and I thought it would be appropriate to share my thoughts with you.

Role of Liturgist- I will only have them doing the Call to Worship and the Scripture Reading. For I believe the person leading worship should do the Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness. In Reformed worship, these two moments aren't merely transitions or invitations to pray. Together they function as a mini movement of Word: Call to Confession → the Law exposes our sin, Assurance of Forgiveness → the Gospel announces God's grace in Christ. Presbyterians have historically understood the ordained minister of Word and Sacrament (or in our case worship leader) as having a particular responsibility for proclaiming both Law and Gospel publicly.

Bible Readings- I don't strictly follow a particular lectionary. I will look at the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the Narrative Lectionary and sometimes The Women's Lectionary. I generally choose whatever seems to speak to me or what contains something I believe the congregation needs to hear.

Liturgy- I won't be using the Abbingdon Press (Methodist) or Feasting on the Word (Presbyterian). Since they generally follow the RCL, for me they aren't necessarily useful or the reading they emphasize or theme they are putting out doesn't fit with my plans.

Affirmation of Faith- I believe that one of the unique strengths for Presbyterians is the role of the Book of Confessions. I will be using a variety of sections from a variety of confessions not just the Apostle's Creed.

I welcome any thoughts, ideas or feedback.

John 4:24 (NRSVUE)

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."



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 one of Jenny Wickman's family favorite casseroles.

Chicken Cordon Bleu Casserole

Base:

5 to 6 C. shredded rotisserie chicken ½ lb. sliced deli-style black forest ham
½ lb. sliced swiss cheese

Sauce:

4 Tbsp butter	2 minced garlic cloves	4 Tbsp. flour
3 C. milk	2 Tbsp. lemon juice	1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
1 1/2 tsp. salt	1 tsp. smoked paprika	½ tsp. pepper

Topping:

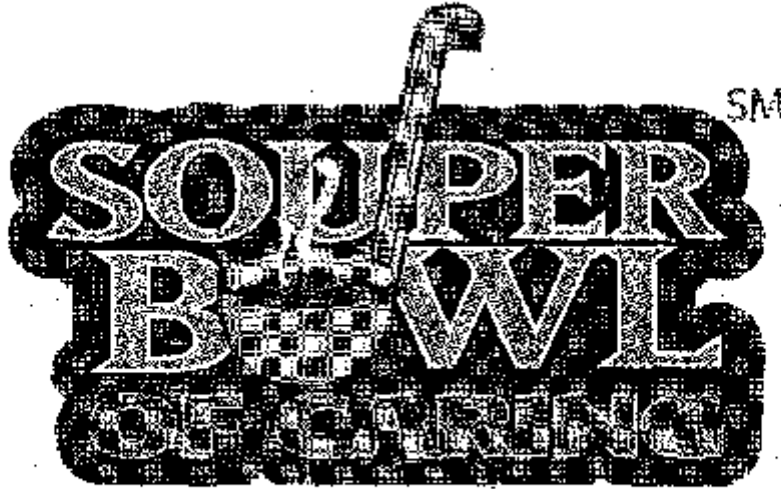
4 Tbsp. melted butter 1 ¼ C. seasoned breadcrumbs or panko
¼ C. parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and spray a 9x13 casserole dish with cooking spray. Layer the chicken in the bottom of the dish, followed by the ham and swiss cheese. Melt the butter over medium heat, in a medium saucepan, and add garlic as it melts. Keep stirring to avoid burning. Stir in salt, pepper, Dijon mustard, paprika and lemon juice. Whisk in the flour and cook for one minute. Add the milk, slowly. Whisk often to keep clumps from forming. Turn the heat to high and cook until the sauce thickens and boils completely. Pour the finished sauce over the base layer already in the pan. Mix the topping ingredients, in a small bowl, until the butter is evenly distributed over the crumbs. Sprinkle over the top and bake for 45 minutes. Allow to cool for 10 minutes before serving so the sauce can thicken a bit.



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.



tacklehunger.org

Please help stock the pantry.

Starting on Sunday, January 12th, the Deacons will be collecting non-perishable food items and monetary donations to help support Bread By The Bay and the Deacon's Food Pantry.

Please bring your food items and place them in front of church until Sunday, February 15th.

February 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 9:00am Deacons 10:30am Worship Installation of Elders & Deacon's/Soup and Sandwich after service	2 Remember Our Chaplains	3 12:30pm Bread by the Bay	4	5 1:00pm Yak & Yarn	6	7
8 10:30am Worship, Camp and Retreat Sunday	9 National Pizza Day	10 Teddy Day	11 Pastor Greg in Office	12 Abraham Lincoln's B-Day 1:00pm Yak & Yarn	13	14
15 10:30am Worship/ Transfiguration of the Lord	16 Presidents' Day	17 12:30pm Bread by the Bay	18 Ash Wednesday	19 1:00pm Yak & Yarn	20	21
22 10:30am Worship, George Washington's B-Day	23 National Banana Bread Day	24	25 Pastor Greg in Office Worship Committee Meeting 10:30am Session Meeting 5:00pm	26 National Letter to an Elder Day 1:00pm Yak & Yarn	27 National Pokémon Day	28 National Chocolate Souffle Day



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