

March 2026

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



Please give securely online at  
[www.fpcocoonto.org](http://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

Emilie Duffy, Cindy Rysewyk  
Wil Andersen, Sam McDowell,  
Krista Stewart

### 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,  
Julie Trepanier

### Hospitality Committee

Michelle McDowell, Emilie Duffy  
Toni Hendzel

## Pastoral Supply Leadership

Pastor Greg Braatz 03/01/2026

Pastor Greg Braatz 03/08/2026

David Rasmussen 03/15/2026

Pastor Greg Braatz 03/22/2025

Gina Struensee 03/29/2025

### Pastor's Corner

One addition to the worship service that you see me add at the start of Lent and that I plan on continuing, is the pouring of water into the baptismal font as the Assurance of Faith is being read.

There are a couple of reasons for doing this:

- This action links us to our baptismal identity: It is a way of reminding us that baptism is the source and sign of our incorporation into Christ, God's forgiveness, and new life (Romans 6, Colossians 2:12). It acts as a reminder of God's grace that we received at our baptism.
- The action on pouring the water moves us from confession (acknowledging our brokenness) to assurance in a very visual and concrete action.
- It adds both a visual and auditory element to worship.

Blessings- Pastor Greg

## Birthdays and Anniversaries

### March

#### Birthdays

Jenny Wickman  
Harlin Nowak  
Craig Bahrke  
Polly Exferd  
Dennis Stamsta  
Brock Werner  
Adelyn Martin  
Bill Hermsen  
Trinity LaPlant  
Julie Trepanier  
Kylee Peterson  
Ellyson Place  
Ellen Braatz

#### Work Anniversary

Stacy Suarez (5 years)



All Military personnel & families including:

Sterling Heyrman stationed in San Diego, CA on the USS Montgomery  
James Alwin 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, Goldsboro, NC.

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

The families and friends of those who have passed away:

**To the family and friends of Mary Grace Murphy,**  
**To the family and friends of James Nerenhausen,**

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, Nancy Guthrie, Ted Haakonson, David Haag, Brynlee Hendzel, Roger Hollander, **Larry Kaszynski, Brian Kaufman,** Rosetta Lehman, Nick Loeffler, Beth Marty, Jim McDowell, Dick Medd, Kairos Ministry, Harlin Nowak, Paul O'Conner, Ashley Pace, **Dick Palmer,** 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 or fill out the card in the pew – 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

March 1	
Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	Polly Exferd
Greeter/Usher	?
Snack Provider	Wil Andersen
Hostess/Close	Wil Andersen

March 8	
Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	Polly Exferd
Greeter/Usher	?
Snack Provider	Michelle Bahrke
Hostess/Close	Michelle Bahrke

March 15	
Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	Polly Exferd
Greeter/Usher	?
Snack Provider	Lynn Rasmussen
Hostess/Close	Polly Exferd

March 22	
Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	Polly Exferd
Greeter/Usher	?
Snack Provider	Polly Exferd
Hostess/Close	Polly Exferd

March 29	
Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	Polly Exferd
Greeter/Usher	?
Snack Provider	?
Hostess/Close	?



### 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 February 3, 2026

Households: 77

Adults: 151

Children: 54

The Pantry served the following February 17, 2026

Households: 68

Adults: 143

Children: 58

Thanks for a job well done!

*COURAGE IS THE FEELING YOU HAVE JUST BEFORE  
YOU FULLY UNDERSTAND THE ODDS. COURAGE IS  
WHAT YOU TAKE WITH YOU TO BEAT THEM. (The Daily Walk Bible)*

**If you have someone you want to add to the prayer list or take off the prayer list, please fill out the Prayer request card and put it into the offering plate. Please do not just tell someone, the office likes to keep records of the prayer request. Thank you!**

**Mission Committee:** For our 1<sup>st</sup> quarter mission giving, 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**- as our global mission giving, which is a wonderful organization working to address hunger worldwide. Please prayerfully consider contributing to these worthy causes.

**From David Rasmussen-**A Leadership Workshop titled "The Sailboat Church" is set for Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, at the Lakewood Presbyterian Church, starting at 8:30am thru 3:00pm. All leaders, elders, deacons, clerks are invited to attend. A noon lunch will be served. If interested in attending, contact Polly for more information.

The Deacons would like to thank everyone who donated to our Souper Bowl of Caring! It was very successful, and we split our items with Bread by the Bay. Our pantry is in pretty good shape to help our community. However, we are seeing an increase in requests for hygiene, cleaning, and paper products. Please prayerfully consider if you can help with those items.



**Clerk of Session** Your session met on Wednesday, February 25<sup>th</sup> and we welcomed our newly installed Elders-Jason Martin, Amy Peterson, and Julie Trepanier. We are blessed that they have chosen to serve our congregation as a faithful elder/leader, along with our current elders Michelle McDowell, Tammie McCarthy, Nikki Giese-Session Recorder, Polly Exferd as Clerk of Session, and Pastore Greg Braatz as Moderator. We also are grateful and say "Thank You" to Mike Duffy, Jim McDowell, Toni Hendzel, and Krista Stewart for their time served, as they have fulfilled their term they were installed to do. We are still in need of one elder to fill the one vacant 3-year term for the session. If you are interested in filling that position, please contact your clerk of session.

Per capita for 2026 in the amount of \$40.42 per member is due by March 31<sup>st</sup>. Please be passionate about getting your per capita paid on time, as this is a great need to help support our budget. Per Capita is a set amount of money (apportionment) per member that congregations pay to the larger Presbyterian Church (USA). It's a Presbyterian Covenant Community Fund-part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together. It connects Presbyterian congregations 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 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Worship** Looking ahead, your Worship Team has been preparing for the Lenten season and Holy Week worship services. Pastor Greg will be here leading worship thru Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, and Gina Struensee will be leading us thru Holy Week up to April 12<sup>th</sup>, while Pastor Greg is on vacation (which was planned when going through the hiring process). Palm Sunday-March 29<sup>th</sup>, we'll have our palm processional, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Maundy Thursday Worship will begin at 6:30pm, No Service here for Good Friday, but please, do attend other services offered in the community, and April 5<sup>th</sup>, Easter Sunday, we'll celebrate the Resurrection of our Risen Lord.

The spring garden at the foot of the cross for Easter Sunday will be put together on Saturday before Easter. There will be a sign-up sheet for you to fill out with your name, who the flowers are in memory or honor of, which will be on the table in the narthex. You may bring in any fresh spring flowers such as lilies, fresh tulips, daffodils, azaleas, carnations, or even silk arrangements if you so wish. Your florals should be here at church prior to 10:30am on that Saturday, when the garden is put together.

### **Adult Education in April!**

Starting April 19<sup>th</sup> and for five weeks, Pastor Greg will be leading an Adult Education Class at 9:30 on Sunday morning. This Session will use Rev. Adam Hamilton's video series "Half Truth – God Helps Those Who Help Themselves and Other Things the Bible Doesn't Say". Each session will start with the group watching an approximately 15-minute video followed by discussion. Each session is self-contained, so if you can't make them all that's ok. Make it when you can. This is the schedule of classes:

- April 19 – Everything Happens for a Reason
- April 26 – God Helps Those Who Help Themselves
- May 3 – God Won't Give You More Than You Can Handle
- May 10 – (Open)
- May 17 – God said it. I believe it, That Settles it.
- May 24 – Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin

There is a companion book with the series that you can purchase if you like but it isn't mandatory.

Blessings,  
Pastor Greg



## Recipe Corner

**We are doing the recipe corner again and Stacy would love for people in the congregation to share their favorite recipes.** This recipe is one that Pastor Greg made this past weekend.

### Israel Cake Cookies

2 ¼ C. gluten free flour blend	½ C. brown sugar	2 tsp. baking powder aluminum free
1 tsp. ground cinnamon	¼ tsp. ground ginger	¼ tsp. ground cloves
2 Large eggs	½ C. honey*	½ C. unsalted butter melted
1/3 C. powdered sugar for rolling the cookies		

In a lg. mixing bowl, add 2 ¼ C. gluten free flour blend, ½ C. brown sugar, 1 tsp. baking powder, 1 tsp. ground cinnamon, ¼ tsp ground ginger and ¼ tsp. ground cloves whisk to blend. In a sm. bowl, add the partially melted ½ C. unsalted butter and ½ C. honey and microwave for 30 sec. to melt/soften. Add 2 Lg. eggs to the butter and honey and whisk. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and mix. Refrigerate the dough for 30 min.. Preheat the oven to 350°. Use a cookie scoop to scoop out cookies. Roll each into a ball. Take each ball and roll in 1/3 C. powdered sugar. Place onto a parchment paper-lined cookie sheet. You can use a glass to press the cookies down a bit or leave round. Bake for 8-10 min. until done.

If your gluten free flour blend doesn't contain Xanthan Gum, add 1 tsp.

These cookies will keep up to 4 days in an airtight container, or up to 4 months in the freezer.

\*You do not need to use an expensive local honey to make these cookies. Just make sure it is 100% pure honey with no additives.

### **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.

Are you looking to begin a devotional practice or scripture reading discipline during Lent? Here are some devotion ideas that can guide you throughout Lent. Most you'll need to use is an email address to subscribe.

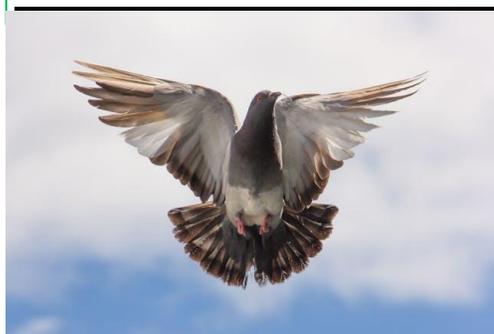
[Lent at Home Family Devotional | Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#): A dinner table devotion based on the Beatitudes.

[The Tomb is Empty but the Streets are Full: An Activist Lenten Devotional - Unbound](#): A collection of writers from many traditions, all approaching Lent through the lens of social justice.

[Lent Prayers to End Hunger Devotional](#): This is a weekly devotional with a reflection, prayer, and suggested spiritual practice.

# March 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
<b>1</b> 9:00am Deacons 10:30am Worship	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 12:30pm Bread by the Bay	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 1:00pm Yak & Yarn	<b>6</b> World Day of Prayer	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> 10:30am Worship, Daylight savings time begins.	<b>9</b> National Napping Day	<b>10</b> Harriet Tubman Day	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> 1:00pm Yak & Yarn	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> 10:30am Worship	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> St. Patrick's Day 12:30pm Bread by the Bay	<b>18</b> Pastor Greg in office	<b>19</b> National Chocolate Caramel Day, 1:00pm Yak & Yarn	<b>20</b> Mr. Rogers Day	<b>21</b> World Down Syndrome Day
<b>22</b> 10:30am Worship	<b>23</b> National Puppy Day	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 1:00pm Yak & Yarn	<b>27</b> World Theatre Day	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> Palm Sunday 10:30am Worship	<b>30</b> Monday of Holy Week	<b>31</b> Tuesday of Holy Week				



**Other Important Dates:**

April 2<sup>nd</sup> Maundy Thursday worship at 6:30pm

April 5<sup>th</sup> Easter Sunday worship at 10:30am

**Good Friday Services at other churches:**

First American Lutheran April 3<sup>rd</sup> 12:10pm

**Information for next newsletter is due to the office by March 23<sup>rd</sup>. If you have a recipe to share, please get it to me by that date also. If you have something you would like to see in the newsletter, please get that to Stacy by that date. Thank you!**