



# *The First Word*

## *September 2025*

### *First United Methodist Church, Racine*

745 Main Street, Racine, WI 53403

262-633-7632

[1racineumc@gmail.com](mailto:1racineumc@gmail.com)

<https://www.firstumcracine.org>

*Pastor*

*Temo Rios*

*Carol Feest*

*Administrative Assistant*

*Jayne Dresen*

*Treasurer*

*Beth Michael*

*Financial Secretary*

*Patti Walker - Interim*

*Church Council Chairperson*

*Chuck Bragg*

*Trustee Chairperson*

*Judith Schulz*

*Church Historian*

*Sue Mills*

*Parish Visitor*

*Nancy Cook*

*Organist*

*Jeanne Whiteside*

*Media Coordinator*

*Joy McClelland*

*Custodian*

*Fellowship host*

*August Grulich*

#### **A New Season, A New Beginning**

September always carries with it a unique rhythm. The long days of summer begin to shorten, the evenings cool down, and a fresh breeze reminds us that autumn is near. Children pack their backpacks, college students return to campus, and families settle into new or the old routines. This change of season stirs both excitement and nervousness—it is the thrill of something new and the uncertainty of stepping into the unknown.

In many ways, life with God is like this. The Lord constantly leads us from one season into another, and each brings its own challenges and blessings. Isaiah reminds us that God is always doing a “new thing” (Isaiah 43:19). The question for us is not whether God is at work—He always is! The question is whether we are ready and expectant for what He will do.

As we begin this school year and transition into fall, I encourage you to pause and reflect on what you are grateful for. Gratitude has a way of steadying our hearts when the unknown feels overwhelming. Give thanks for God’s faithfulness last season, and trust that His goodness will meet you in the next.

For our students and teachers, this is a time to learn, grow, and be a witness of Christ’s love in classrooms and on campuses. For parents and grandparents, it is a season of prayer and encouragement—lifting up the next generation as they step forward in faith. For all of us, it is an opportunity to embrace the new things God is unfolding in our lives and in our church.

Let’s walk together into this new season with open hearts and hands. May we be a people who live with gratitude, trust with courage, and expect God to do more than we could ask or imagine.

**In Christ’s steadfast love,  
Pastor Temo**

# **A message from Bishop Schwerin**

## **2026 Will Be a Year of . . .**

Let me begin with gratitude.

Thank you for your faithfulness, especially for how you have offered the peace and presence of Christ in tumultuous days.

You have been planning trainings to make clear how our mission is antithetical to Christian Nationalism. You have been organizing to provide sanctuary for people who have been harassed by the empire. You have been experimenting in ministry, some with mergers, some with reaching new people—and practice grace for the experiments as needed. I have seen your energy about vacation Bible school and supporting our camps.

I also celebrate the increase in apportionment payments in both annual conferences. Your gift helps us advance vocations into service, develop programs and connections that a local church cannot do alone, and help us grant and coach congregational development so that we might innovate and bless our ministries in this space and time.

This year I have appreciated the ways that the Northern Illinois and Wisconsin conferences have been living out a year of grace. Even before it is visible to us, we know prevenient grace is at work.

Grace is the unconditional, expansive love of God offered to all people in every moment. We have learned how we are here to grow by grace working in love. Thank you for the ways that you have explored and lived gracefully in your communities. Obviously, we share a common mission: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. My life is seized by that mission and has been transformed in it. I trust your life has as well.

I'm very grateful that The United Methodist Church adopted a new vision statement. I do believe we are here to “love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.” I celebrate this vision for our steps together.

Let me now look ahead to 2026 by turning to scripture; specifically, Psalm 130:5: “I wait for the Lord; my soul waits, and in his word, I hope.”

This is a psalm for the night. Poets and prophets have spoken eloquently about our night prayers or our dark nights of the soul. One of my favorite lines in the scripture is John 20:1, which introduces Jesus's resurrection by saying, “while it was still dark . . .” I love the fact that God is working while it is still dark and when God's ways are unseen to most of us. When I was born, the doctor told my mother a message about the night. I was born with pneumonia and jaundice. “If he gets through the night, he may make it,” the doctor said.

Maybe this reminds you of the ways you have found God or reached out in prayer while it was still dark. We all have had those nights when we prayed fervently for healing or wellbeing, or we have had some experience of the dark night of the soul or an experience of night that seeks the hand of God.

Meantime, what kind of spiritual focus is needed for our leadership in this moment?

It is a time when many are dispirited for a variety of reasons. We have been divided by powerful monied interests who want us to fear and distrust each other so that we can be administered by fear. That has robbed us of our conviction that Christ is more than our opinions and that we are building back church unity, local collaboration, functional systems, and relationships at our holiday tables. It must be said that we are now being administered by misinformation that takes us toward darkness.

But we are people of hope. There is always more God than meets the eye. I was attending United Women in Faith's Mission in Northern Illinois and listened to a study on "practicing hope." I was touched and moved by the ways in which UWF recognized that the challenges in this time start with the soul and how we can remain grounded and oriented to Christ when political messages threaten people groups.

They explored how the nature of our God is hope, how God's coming in the flesh is hopeful, how there is always more God than meets the eye, and how our life together is one of practicing hope.

A deaconess (a lay order of women who pursue love and justice) named Martha Lundgren, who is a member of Renewed Hope UMC in Chicago, sat next to me at lunch. She told me how her congregation realized that they spent most of their budget on maintaining the building. Wasn't God calling them to do more and be more?

So they prayed, grounded themselves in God and discernment, and considered what Jesus would have them do with the people they were given to love. They eventually sold the building and focused on how they might bring Christian love and a faith community into the neighborhood to impact the lives of people in their area. Now they have a powerful ministry with residents of a nearby nursing home.

"I think we are practicing hope in our ministry," she said, "and I wonder, Bishop, if what you say is true for almost everyone: that most churches have 35 or fewer in worship. Maybe for the year 2026 we should pray and think about our theme's being "practicing hope"?"

I put down my pea soup and knew God was whispering.

In this dark time we might be stronger if we practiced hope. I love the idea that we are not alone; we practice hope as a community of faith. We are practicing hope when we worship together and decide we will not isolate but bear witness with and to each other.

We can practice hope as we "resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves," to quote our baptismal vows. What does it mean to do this? What brings hope for you?

I sense that the churches that are trying to decide their futures could make better decisions if they were practicing hope as they discern what God may have for them in the future.

We will still live out our vision and be seized by the same mission, but we can be stronger in this moment when we know our two conferences, our episcopal area, is practicing hope together.

I believe we are grounded in the hope of our baptism, where we have joined Christ, where we belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

I believe the creativity and freedom of God calls us forward in hope. This is not fake happy talk, or hope on a shelf, but gospel grounded life lived on the foundation of our baptism: the never-ending love that is poured into our hearts and life in Jesus Christ.

Hope allows for newness. Hope allows that God will call us forward. Hope allows us to say yes to whatever call is placed on our lives.

I believe that as long as we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, we have a relationship with hope. John Wesley reminded us that we are not defined by our opinions or agreements, but by the image of God born in us and growing by grace in and through us. All people bear the dignity of the image of God. Our discipleship itself is a stance against racism.

I wonder if we might think about the end of this year as a time to ground ourselves in grace so that we approach Advent and the new year asking the question, How is God calling us to be people who are practicing hope?

I know that our God offers us a hopeful imagination. We are children of an Exodus God, a God who knows how to carry us through exile; a God who knows the path from death to resurrection. How might hope grow in your life and lives of our churches and how might that bring hope to those God has given us to love?

Best of all, God is with us, and God is not finished with us yet.

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word, I hope."

Thanks be to God.

Hope to you in the power and love we know as Christ.

Dan Schwerin, Bishop  
Northern Illinois-Wisconsin Episcopal Area  
The United Methodist Church

## **SEPTEMBER SERMON SERIES**

### **"I Will Call Upon The Lord"**

*"Sometimes there is nothing left to do but sing. Does that sound odd? It is said of the Methodist movement that we were born in song. We sing our faith, and our songs are about calling out to God. This late summer/early fall we turn to the song book that has sustained and defined the people of God from the very beginning – the Psalms. The Psalms give words to a variety of emotions and circumstances out of which we call upon the Lord. We shape our worship around these words to give voice to people in our communities who may feel unheard even by God. The witness of the Psalms is that God is prepared to meet us where we are. So let us call upon the Lord."*

### **SEPTEMBER 7, 2025**

**Theme:** "God Knows My Name"

**Scriptures:** Jeremiah 18:1-11  
& Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

### **SEPTEMBER 14, 2025**

**Theme:** "Our Hope is in the Lord"

**Scriptures:** Psalm 14 & Luke 15:1-10

### **SEPTEMBER 21, 2025**

**Theme:** "For the Glory"

**Scriptures:** Psalm 79:1-9 & Luke 16:1-13

### **SEPTEMBER 28, 2025**

**Theme:** "Safety in the Shadow of the Lord"

**Scriptures:** Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16; Luke 16:19-31

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY IN SEPTEMBER!!**

- 1 - Carol Buhler  
Marcia Fernholz
- 6 – Bryson McKenney
- 8 - Jean Harmon
- 10 - Brittany Piliouras  
Melanie Guckenberger  
Shannon Hirth
- 16 - Chuck Bragg
- 17 - Al Feest
- 30 - Peter Feest Jr.

## **HAPPY ANNIVERSARY IN SEPTEMBER!!**

- 1 - Al & Dee Feest
- 2 - Scott & Connie Boehm
- 5 - Paul & Peggy Nejedly
- 16 - Scott & Wendy Toutant



## **FOOD PANTRY COLLECTION**

Our item for September will be canned fruit. Bring your contributions to the church any time and place them in the crates near the entrances. Thanks for your continued support of the food banks of Racine.



## **CHANCEL CHOIR TO RESUME**

We are pleased to announce that our wonderful choir will resume singing each Sunday morning on **September 21**. New members are always welcome – no experience required - just a desire to provide music to enhance our morning worship. Rehearsals are held on Sunday mornings at 8:30 am. We hope to see a few new faces joining us.

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### **Each Sunday –**

(starting the 21<sup>st</sup>) Choir Rehearsal at 8:30 am  
Morning Worship at 9:30 am  
Casa de Dios Worship at 5:00 pm

### **Each Friday-**

Bible Study at 10:00 am

### **Sunday, September 7**

First Sunday Breakfast at 8:30 am

### **Sunday, September 14**

Worship in the Park – 10:00 am (see flyer)

### **Wednesday, September 17**

Finance meeting at 10:00 am





## *Join us for Service in the Park*

### *Location*

Crawford Park  
5199 Chester Ln, Racine, WI 53402

### *Date*

September 14, 2025

### *Time*

10:00 Service  
11:15 Potluck Lunch and Fellowship

Meat and buns will be provided  
Please bring a dish to pass  
Bring your own non-alcoholic beverages to enjoy!

There will be games available and we are right next to the playground in the pavilion with access to the bathrooms. There will be picnic tables for seating unless you want to bring your own chair.

**Please RSVP your attendance and dish you will be bringing by September 5<sup>th</sup> to either the church office [1racineumc@gmail.com](mailto:1racineumc@gmail.com) or Pete Feest Jr. [pfeestjr@wi.rr.com](mailto:pfeestjr@wi.rr.com)**

### ***The First Word***

is published monthly by  
First United Methodist Church  
745 Main Street, Racine, WI 53403  
Phone: 262-633-7632 - (414) 852-3722 (Pastor)  
[1racineumc@gmail.com](mailto:1racineumc@gmail.com) or  
[temorios@Icloud.com](mailto:temorios@Icloud.com)

Website: <https://www.firstumcracine.org>

Pastor's office hours – Wednesday and Friday 8:00 until 3:00

Pastor – Temo Rios

Editor – Carol Feest

**First United Methodist Church  
745 Main Street  
Racine, WI 53403**

---

**First United Methodist Church**

**The Vision statement:**

**Inspire all to live faithfully in Jesus Christ**

**The Mission statement:**

**Gather, Equip, and Serve our community and the world in the name  
Jesus Christ!**