



The First Word

February 2026

First United Methodist Church, Racine

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Dear Church Family,

As we move through February, we find ourselves still living in the light of Epiphany—a season that reminds us that God is not hidden or distant, but revealed in Jesus Christ and present in the ordinary rhythms of our lives. Epiphany invites us to pay attention: to moments of clarity, to unexpected grace, and to the ways God continues to show up among us. On February 15, we will celebrate Transfiguration Sunday, when the disciples catch a glimpse of Jesus' glory on the mountain. It is a moment of awesomeness, but also clarity, a reminder of who Jesus truly is before the road leads downward toward Jerusalem. This day stands as a threshold—between revelation and response, between seeing clearly and being sent back into the world. And Lord knows the world needs us to testify on the behalf of His love and justice!

Just a few days later, on Ash Wednesday, February 18, we begin the season of Lent. Though Lent often feels like a starting line, it is worth remembering that all meaningful journeys begin not with movement, but with preparation. Before we take steps of repentance, prayer, or self-examination, we pause. We listen. We allow God to ready our hearts for what lies ahead. We will have an Ash Wednesday ceremony on the first Sunday of Lent on February 22nd.

As a church, this season calls us not to rush, but to remain attentive—to worship together, to walk together, and to trust that God will meet us along the way. Let us continue to gather, to watch, and to wonder how God will show up among us in the days ahead.

With grace and love,

Pastor Temo Rios

FEBRUARY SERMON THEMES

February 1 – Communion Sunday

Theme: **“What is Good”**

Scriptures: Micah 6:1-8 & Matthew 5:1-12

February 8

Theme: **“Call to Action”**

Scriptures: Isaiah 58:1-12 & Matthew 5:13-20

February 15

Theme: **“Glory Revealed”**

Scriptures: Exodus 24:12-18 &

Matthew 17:1-9

LENTEN SERMON SERIES

The Lenten journey may seem overly familiar. Indeed, we have been here before. There is comfort in the familiar. Many of the rituals and practices of this season are comfortable. They give us a sense of place, like being home again. This can be a good starting place for the season, an invitation to walk the paths we have walked before. We encourage the community to gather once again. Yet, the Lenten journey and our discipleship path encourage us to grow, to go deeper, to climb higher, to reach further than we may have before. Lent is a time of introspection, but also a call to action as we seek to be the pilgrim people of God, seeking God’s kingdom and shaping God’s kingdom in worship and in service. This Lent, we invite you to experience the renewal that comes from God’s never-ending mercy and then to walk with our Lord on a journey to new life.

February 22 - First Sunday in Lent

Theme: **“Mercy on the Wilderness Road”**

Scriptures: Psalm 32 & Mathew 4:1-11

ASH WEDNESDAY is February 18. We will not be having a worship service here that day. Here at First Church we will observe Ash Wednesday on Sunday, February 22.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY IN FEBRUARY

3 - Erika Feest

10 –Austin Feest

13 – Pat Held

14 – Christian Ferguson

27 – Esther Voker



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY IN FEBRUARY

11 – Robert & Elissa Pischke

25 – Jakes & Esther Voker

BROWN BAG LUNCH – First Church is responsible for the Sack Lunches on Saturday, February 21. Help is needed to pack the lunches at 10:30 am at St. Luke’s Church Hospitality Center. Please let Carol know if you are willing to help. Thanks.

FOOD BANK ITEM FOR FEBRUARY

The food bank item will be dried potatoes. Plastic or heavy grocery bags with handles are needed for clients that walk, ride the bus or bike. Thanks so much for your support of this mission. Thanks for helping feed the hungry of our city.

LOOSE CHANGE OFFERING FOR FEBRUARY will benefit Safe Haven of Racine. The SAFE Haven Shelter is an eight bed multi-cultural community based residential shelter locally controlled by SAFE Haven of Racine, Inc. (formerly Racine Runaway), a private non-profit incorporated in 1971 and licensed by the State as a group home for youth through age 17 in need of emergency shelter due to runaway behaviors and homelessness. Counseling is provided to the youth and family members. The project provides

residential and non-residential services to runaway and homeless youth including: outreach to youth and the community, direct individual 24 hour intake and assessment; temporary shelter for up to 14 days; food and clothing; individual, group, family and peer counseling sessions for the youth and their family members; positive youth development case management including information and coordinated referral; recreation and leisure activities; aftercare; follow-up, and evaluation. SAFE Haven staff work to prevent youth from running away or becoming homeless through drop-in or home-based services.

“Breaking Up is Hard to Do”

Dear Church,

It is with mixed emotions that I announce the official disbanding of our first United Methodist volunteer group for the Northside Food Pantry, effective at the end of January. Jayne Dresen, our church member, will continue to volunteer, enrolling the clients that use the pantry on the 3rd Thursday of each month, with other volunteers representing First Church.

Over the past months, we have experienced medical issues within our group that interfere with our effectiveness and our ability to do the work required. First United Methodist will continue to have the food pantry as one of our missions by donating funding, food, and prayers just as we always done. Food will be taken to the pantry from church by Patti or Jayne, whatever works for us, to be served on the 3rd Thursday from 2-4 of each month.

I am immensely proud of what our group achieved together at the food pantry with the following churches:
Emaus ELCA, First United Methodist,

North Pointe United Methodist, Second Presbyterian, St. Mary's by the Lake, St. Mesrob Armenian Church. Through their dedication, compassion, and hard work, our group has:

- Been a part of the Northside Food Pantry since 2012, members and friends of the church have formed this team to work at various food pantry tasks over the years.
- Discovering the need of many folks in this economy even though they work at several jobs and do the best they can.
- Provided meals and support for those in need, the Northside pantry with the help of 6 other churches has served food, given out grocery cards, served meals, diapers and other necessary items.
- Created lasting friendships and a spirit of unity with those who come to the pantry for assistance.
- Shared the many blessings they have with others.

While our group will no longer operate as an organized unit, Jayne Dresen will continue to volunteer with a group of volunteers, and all church members are encouraged to continue their commitment to this mission of our church. If you have any questions or would like information about volunteering at the food pantry, please reach out to Steven Oppeneer at 262 664 3383 or [soppeneer @att.net](mailto:soppeneer@att.net).

With heartfelt appreciation,
Patti Walker of First United Methodist Church

Other group members:

Cheryl Brulport, Catherine Gister, Jayne Dresen, Kathy Laru, Ane Poulsen, Sue Spicer



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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!

The First Word

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