CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEENAH/ MENASHA

Ministry Council Minutes
March 5, 2026

Present: Pastor Rob, Chuck Luebke, Mary Janness, Sue Knuth, Chris Parsons, Signa Meyers, Connie Regazzi, Terri Flesburg

Missing: Becky Nichols, Marilyn Kostrzak, Jeff Nichols, Sherri Jischke

Quorum Count (at least six council members/more than one-half of council): Quorum confirmed.

Minutes taken by: Chris Parsons

Welcome Guests: Denise Stewart, Kevin Shumann

Gathering Devotion: Pastor Rob

Approval of February 5, 2026 Agenda and Minutes: Approved

Consent Agenda Items:

Item	Owner	Minutes from last meeting
Ministry of Spiritual Life Highlights • Branch palms will be provided for Palm Sunday. • Communion will be served in the pews on Easter. Escalations or decisions • None	Terri	January 11, 2026
Ministry of Service Highlights • Petie Agnew has joined the Ministry of Service team. Welcome, Petie, and THANK YOU! • The Ministry is investigating re-starting alternative Christmas (including alternative gifts and partnering with the Fond du Lac store). Escalations or decisions • None	Mary	November 19, 2025
Ministry of Faith Development Highlights • Please see the March 5, 2026 CE Director's Report. Escalations or decisions • None	Denise Stewart (representing Becky)	January 13, 2026
Ministry of Stewardship (Stewardship, Finance, Building and Grounds, Insurance) Highlights • Ministry made recommendation to replace flooring. Council approved the recommendation.	Pastor Rob/Kevin Shumann (representing Jeff)	February 24, 2026

• Congregational meeting will be held March 22 for congregational approval. • Please see attached Exhibit A (March 6, 2026 Congregational Email) for additional information. Additional escalations or decisions • None		
Pastor's Report Highlights • One of the major highlights of the month was Scouting Sunday, February 15, 2026, which happened to coincide with several significant anniversaries: 175 years as a congregation, 100 years of partnership with scouting, and 10 years as an Open and Affirming church. Heartfelt thanks go to Dan and Sherri Jischke for the decorations and to Mowry Smith and Kevin Shumann for their research and coordination with the scouts—including our new Troop 50. Their work helped make the day truly special. Escalations or decisions • None	Pastor Rob	January 2026

Discussion Agenda:

Old Business

- ICE Review – Chris, et al.
    - Review of ICE Preparedness memo; please see attached Exhibit B.
    - Comments from Council included the following:
        i. Identifying lead/head ushers who would want to be part of the team and then finding others; needing to have individuals available every week and people who are comfortable being part of the response team.
        ii. Providing awareness and instruction for every group using the church (such as note cards with easy steps and coloring coding).
        iii. Communicating initiative to the congregation.
        iv. Including this as a standing agenda item for future council meetings.
    - Council approved moving forward with three general recommendations in the memo.

- Appreciative Inquiry Update – Pastor Rob
    - The next session is March 14. The objective is to identify projects we are going to do and turn the past work into concrete reality with a purpose.
    - In April, we will have a celebration of some sort. The format may be in flux because of the flooring project.

New Business

- Calendar Review
    - March 6 – Youth group
    - March 8 – Congregation conversation will be postponed in view of the listening session for flooring
    - March 8 – No High School Sunday School. High School will only be doing crosswalk for the remainder of the semester
    - March 11 – Lenten dinner (council hosting) and conversation
    - March 14 – Appreciative Inquiry session
    - March 15 – Listening session after church for flooring
    - March 18 – Lenten dinner and conversation
    - March 20 – Fun with Friends with Karaoke and pizza (6:30 pm in the lounge)

    - March 22 – Congregational meeting immediately after worship, for election of officers and vote on flooring
    - March 24 – meetings for Ministry of Faith Development and Ministry of Stewardship
    - March 25 – Lenten dinner and conversation
    - March 29 – no Sunday School
    - March 29 – Palm Sunday rally at Houdini Plaza (1-3pm)

- Ministry Council Positions up for election
    - Treasurer – Jeff Nichols will be stepping down. Marilyn will be running. Assuming Marilyn is elected, someone else will be needed to assist with bookkeeping.
    - Secretary
    - Ministry of Spiritual Life Ministry Coordinator
    - At-Large Member

Lord's Prayer

Next meeting: Wednesday April 1, 2026, instead of Thursday April 2, 2026, as that is Maundy Thursday

Next Devotion: Pastor Rob

Exhibit A - March 6, 2026 Congregational Email

Calling a Congregational Meeting on Sunday March 22, 2026 Please Read

From: Melanie Nault (office@cuccnm.org)

Date: Friday, March 6, 2026 at 09:03 AM CST

March 6, 2026

Grace and peace to you.

Ministry of Stewardship, with the support of the Ministry Council, is calling a **Congregational Meeting** on **Sunday, March 22, 2026**, immediately following worship. Because Easter Sunday falls on the first Sunday of April this year, this Congregational Meeting will be held on March 22, 2026.

The meeting will include (1) business regarding building flooring and (2) election of 2026 Ministry Council members. Your participation is important, and we encourage all voting members to attend.

1. Business Regarding Building Flooring

Ministry of Stewardship, with approval of Ministry Council, will recommend for congregational approval a project for building flooring. As part of the planning process, it was found that certain existing flooring contains asbestos, which is common in buildings our age.

The **recommended motion** will be as follows:

> **Ministry of Stewardship moves to hire AAR (Advanced Asbestos Removal, Inc. (Pickett, WI)) for the removal of existing flooring and Macco's Floor Covering Center for the flooring to replace the current flooring based on the contracted wording in the estimates with the total project to be completed for no more than $80,000.**

Please note that **asbestos containing materials are safe when they remain intact and undisturbed**. Because flooring must be removed for flooring project, the work will be completed by a **certified asbestos abatement contractor** in full compliance with all state and federal regulations, including but not limited to Wisconsin DNR prior approval.

What to generally expect:

- **Affected areas will be fully sealed off during the flooring project.**
- **Only licensed professionals will perform the removal of flooring.**
- **Air quality testing will be completed before the spaces are reopened.**
- **No staff, volunteers, or congregants will be permitted in the work areas until clearance is confirmed.**

Timeline: Pending congregational approval, work is tentatively scheduled to begin April 6, 2026. Additional information will be provided on any adjustments to church events.

Why we are doing this: Replacing the flooring will improve safety, accessibility, and long-term stewardship of our building. The Ministry Council is committed to completing this work responsibly and transparently, with the well-being of the congregation as our highest priority.

Two **listening sessions** will be held on **March 8** and **March 15**, immediately after worship in the lounge, to offer background, answer questions, and share details about the recommended motion.

For the March 22 Congregational Meeting, a **voice vote** is recommended, with **no absentee ballots or Zoom option**.

Lake Edge Learning Center has been, and will continue to be, informed about the project plans as a shared-space partner.

The use of **Fellowship Hall has been temporarily paused**, and activities have been relocated to other available areas in the church. Outside groups who use the building have also been notified of this temporary change.

2. Election of 2026 Ministry Council Members

The meeting will also include the election of Church Council members. Positions up for election include:

- **Treasurer**
- **Secretary**
- **Ministry of Spiritual Life Coordinator**
- **At-Large Council Member**

Members who feel called to serve in one of these important leadership roles are encouraged to speak with the Nominating Committee, Ministry Council Vice Moderator **Sue Knuth,** or **Pastor Rob**.

Your Participation Matters

The decisions we make together help support the ministry, mission, and future of our congregation. Thank you for your ongoing commitment, thoughtful engagement, and care for the life of our church community.

Sincerely,

Signa Meyers, Moderator
Sue Knuth, Vice Moderator
Rev. Rob Van Ess, Pastor

Exhibit B – ICE Preparedness Memo

To: CUCCNM Ministry Council

From: Pastor Rob, Sue Knuth, Kevin Shumann, Becky Nichols, Chris Parsons

Subject: ICE Preparedness

Date: March 5, 2026

As a follow-up to the February 5, 2026 Ministry Council meeting, Pastor Rob, Sue, Kevin, Becky, and Chris (the "ICE Review Team") met to review information related to ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement) preparedness and to draft the following recommendation for CUCCNM[1].

Considering CUCCNM's commitment to people, our initial recommendation is to proceed with an initial focus on the following matters:

- Safety & Security Protocols
- Legal Preparedness
- Technology & Communication

Additional areas could be explored following the implementation of these initial matters.

Safety & Security Protocols

As part of Safety & Security Protocols, we recommend identifying and training a small response team.

We recommend that members of the response team include Pastor Rob, lead ushers, and youth group leaders, with others to be determined. Once the members of the response team are identified, the ICE Review Team can take the lead in training. Training of this team will include the following:

- Recognizing valid versus invalid warrants
- Properly using video to document interactions
- Maintaining a non-anxious presence
- Knowing when not to engage

The response team will establish which specific individuals will speak to law enforcement, document encounters, alert leadership, etc.

[1] These recommendations are specific to CUCCNM and are not a "building policy." While information has been and will continue to be shared with Lake Edge, the scout troops that meet at CUCCNM, and the AA group that meets at CUCCNM, each such organization is responsible to draft its own plan (if so desired).

Training materials include various videos and other materials available from ACLU (Microsoft PowerPoint - WCC_January_2026 SAFE and Immigrants' Rights - ACLU of Wisconsin), Apoya La Gente (Know Your Rights - Apoya La Gente and ICE Encounters - Apoya La Gente) and Forward Latino (Forward Latino Know Your Rights And Family Preparation Video). As part of the training, the response team will practice protocols before any crisis.

See below for a summary of the response team, from https://us.list-manage.com/iwt54Mf8qMy?e=1b750ed437&c2id=88e2db55bc2da4e60a8b99707f67e116



Legal Preparedness

We have two general recommendations related to Legal Preparedness:

1. Develop a written policy to clearly define the public spaces and the private spaces with the CUCCNM building. Public spaces are and will continue to be the worship center, the narthex, the lounge, the hallways connecting these spaces. Private spaces could be the offices and other areas in accordance with the CUCCNM Safe Church Policy.
2. Build relationships with local immigration attorneys, identifying one or two legal contacts for rapid consultation, if/when needed. Chris will take the lead to identify attorneys.

Technology & Communication

Use of technology (specifically, video recording and other documentation tools) will be included in the training of the response team. We also recommend evaluating how information is currently shared and available at CUCCNM. For example, how do we limit the sharing of personal identifying information during announcements and in other church communications? Additionally, do we consider changing the position of the cameras for online worship?