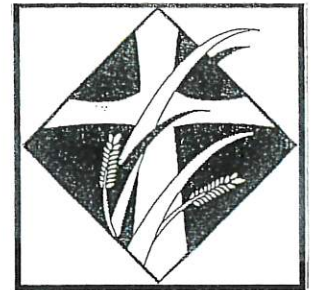




May, 2026

The Prairie Press



Volume 18, No. 9

Mary Ellen Ahrens Joins Rock Prairie Congregation

by Chris Stried

Mary Ellen Ahrens comes to us from Delavan, where she has lived for 36 years. Her husband of 45 years is Irwin Jr. (but everyone calls him Junior.)

They met when Mary Ellen was serving hamburgers and shakes at Henry's Hamburgers in Wheeling, IL, her hometown.

They were married on her in-laws' farm in Walworth, "outdoor, pig-roast style," she recalls.

They have two children, Carl, 36, and April, 32. Reed, 8, and Levi, 2, are their grandchildren.

Mary Ellen has worked at the Aurora Health Care in Lake Geneva for 25 years as a patient service representative, but as of May 1, she will be retired!

Her job involved answering phone calls, updating patients' insurance information, and assisting with communication to clinical teams.

She says she enjoyed being helpful to patients as they navigated their way through the often frustrating health care system.

She said, "The most satisfying part of my work was when I could advocate for them in pursuit of **Mary Ellen Ahrens** customer service recovery records."

Mary Ellen enjoys gardening, with a sizable vegetable and perennial garden in front of her house. Her husband had been taking care of it as he has been recovering from knee replacement.

She also loves spending time with her grandsons and spending

(Continued on page 5)



Presentation On Scams, Frauds Scheduled

"Common Scams and Frauds" will be the topic of a presentation at 11 am (following Worship) on Sunday, June 4, in the Fellowship Hall.

Jeff Kersten is an Outreach Specialist for the Bureau of Consumer Protection within the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection.

Jeff will discuss the details of common scams, the warning signs of a scam, and what to do if you or someone you know falls victim to a scam or a fraud.

He will offer helpful factsheets from his bureau.

As Wisconsin's lead agency for consumer protection, their focus is on providing information and education, mediation for complaints, investigation of cases, and enforcement of statutes designed to

(Continued on page 3)



On Palm Sunday, members of our Sunday School classes, along with parents, teachers, and members of the Christian Education Committee assembled 75 baskets and 11 gift bags (Continued on page 10)

In This Issue

Letters To The Editor
Page 3

Communion
Page 6

'Souper Sundays'
Page 7

Easter Breakfast
Page 8

Easter Baskets
Pages 10-11



Pentecost: A Way Of Life

by Rev. Bruce

Fifty days after Easter brings us to May 24th, Pentecost Sunday.

We encourage everyone to wear red to Worship that day as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who appeared to the Disciples and the congregation as "tongues of fire."

Pentecost invites us to remember that the Holy Spirit is not an abstract concept but the living presence of God in our lives.

The Spirit equips ordinary people for an extraordinary calling. Pentecost is not only a moment in the church year, but it is a renewal of the Spirit's work in daily life.

Pentecost, "The birthday of the church," marks the beginning of the Christian Church. But Pentecost Sunday, like our own birthday celebrations, marks the anniversary of spiritual growth.

The Disciples were not ready, confident, or powerful. They were waiting and praying, unsure of what would come next. Yet the Spirit met them in their uncertainty and turned them into witnesses.

Pentecost teaches us that God does not wait for perfect conditions

or perfect people. God breathes life into those who are willing to receive.

Pentecost is a reminder that the same Spirit Who moved in Acts 2 is still moving in us today. Scripture describes the Spirit guiding us on a faith journey with God's presence woven into the fabric of everyday life.

The Spirit gives us courage to live our faith with integrity. The Spirit brings believers together in unity in the church regardless of our generation, culture, and personalities.

In Christ, through the Spirit, we are one body, the church.

The Spirit leads us toward wisdom in making decisions. If we seek God's guidance, the Spirit will answer our prayers with Scripture, a powerful compassionate thought, or some wise words from a friend.

Pentecost reminds us to listen to the Lord. The Spirit empowers and equips us for Christian service. Every believer is given gifts for the common good. The Spirit uses all of these to build up the body of Christ and renew our hope for the future.

When we feel inadequate, the Spirit encourages us to serve our Risen Lord.

Pentecost is not a single Sunday; it is a way of life. The Spirit invites us to:

- Pray expectantly, trusting that God still speaks;
- Listen deeply, especially to those who differ from us;
- Serve generously, using our gifts for others;
- Speak truthfully, with grace and courage;
- Hope persistently, believing that God is not finished with us

or the world.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Bruce

Pastor's Schedule

Rev. Bruce will observe the Sabbath on May 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29. Extra Sunday—May 17.

Preaching Schedule

5th Sunday of Easter, May 3

**Acts 7:55-60; *I Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14; *John 14:15-21; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16.

"Stone or Cornerstone?"

6th Sunday of Easter, May 10

**Acts 17:22-31; I Peter 3:13-22; *John 14:15-21; Psalm 66:7-18.

"Known and Sent"

7th Sunday of Easter, May 17, Pastor Russ Antos

Acts 1:6-14; I Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11; John 17:1-11; Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36.

"A Persistent Call
To Faith Renewed"

Pentecost Sunday, May 24

Acts 2:1-21; or Numbers 11:24-30; **I Corinthians 12:3b-13; or Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23; or *John 7:37-39; Psalm 104:25-35, 37.

"The Spirit Flows, We Live"

Trinity Sunday, May 31

Genesis 1:1-2, 4a; **2 Corinthians 13:11-13; *Matthew 28:16-20; Psalm 8.

"Mission 3 In 1"
(Continued on page 5)

How To Contact Us

The Prairie Press is a publication of the congregation of the Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church.

8605 County Rd. A
Janesville WI 53546

(608) 752-1172

office@rockprairiechurch.org

Visit our web site at
rockprairiechurch.org

Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your generous donations to the Whitewater Food Pantry.

Your continued support is appreciated!

Pat Chaput and
The Board of
Directors

Dear Editor:

On March 15, a black down jacket with red leather gloves in the pockets was accidentally taken from the hall coatrack.

A similar coat was left behind. Please check your closet and make the exchange.

Thanks!

Kay Ward

Dear Editor:

As the world fights to figure everything out, I'll be holding doors for strangers, letting people cut in front of me in traffic, saying "Good morning!" with a smile, keeping babies entertained in grocery lines, being patient with sales clerks, stopping to talk to someone who may be lonely, tipping generously, giving children a thumbs up, waving at police, smiling at passersby, and buying a stranger a cup of coffee.

Why?

Because I will not stand to live in a world where love is invisible. Join me in showing kindness, un-

derstanding, and judging less.

If you can't find kindness, be kindness.

A Friend

RPC Bazaar To Feature New Tables

The Bazaar Committee is planning on adding two new tables to our fall bazaar.

One will be costume jewelry (Marti can hardly wait!)

The other will feature pet items, such as pet treats, good clean toys, and maybe even a cat tree.

You can bring items to the church any time—please do!

Special Olympics Golf Fundraiser Set

The "Detective Mike Duerr Memorial Scramble" is a golf tournament to benefit the Janesville Area Special Olympics Program.

This year's event will be played at the Glen Erin Golf Course on Saturday, June 19.

"The Janesville Area Special Olympics is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing year-round sports training and competitive opportunities for athletes with intellectual disabilities.

"We are funded entirely through private donations and fundraising events. Every dollar raised at this outing stays local, directly supporting athletes in the Janesville area.

"Nearly 125 athletes from

throughout Rock County participate in our program. We currently offer training and competition in eight sports, including basketball, swimming, track & field, powerlifting, cornhole, softball, bocce, bowling—and, of course, golf.

To register or obtain more information, contact Lisa Buchanan, local program manager, at

janesvilleareaspécialolympics@gmail.com

Scams, Frauds . . .

(Continued from page 1)

protect consumers and fight fraudulent and deceptive practices that harm both consumers and honest businesses.

Come to Worship at 9:30 (note change to Summer Worship schedule), and bring along a sack lunch or snack to enjoy prior to the start of the presentation.

The program will last approximately 45 minutes.

Letter Policy

The PRAIRIE PRESS welcomes letters from our members and friends.

We will print them all, as space permits.

Send or email or drop off your letter to the Church office,

attn: The PRAIRIE PRESS

Please continue to collect aluminum cans.

Drop them off in the bins behind the partition near the main entrance.

The cans are recycled regularly, and the money is sent to the Living Water Mission.

The requested items for the Food Pantry Cart for May is canned vegetables.

Let's fill up the cart and help our less fortunate and struggling neighbors as we show God's love by sharing our own blessings.



May 2026

June 2026

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

May 2025

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Apr 26	27	28	29	30	May 1	2
3 9:15am Adult School 9:15am Book Study 9:15am Children School 10:30am Worship Fall	4	5 9:30am Bible Study 3:30pm Mission Committee Meeting 6:30pm Christian Ed	6	7 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal	8 10:30am Prairie Pals	9
10 9:15am Adult School 9:15am Book Study 9:15am Children School 10:30am Worship Fall	11 3:00pm Finance Committee Meeting	12 3:00pm B&G Committee Meeting 6:30pm Worship Committee Meeting	13 9:30am Deacon Meeting 6:30pm Outreach & Communication Committee Meeting	14 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal	15	16
17 LAST DAY OF SUNDAY 9:15am Adult School 9:15am Book Study 9:15am Children School	18	19 6:30pm Session Meets	20	21 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal	22	23
24 Communion 10:30am Worship Fall Schedule	25	26	27	28 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal	29	30 6:30pm Sky Carp BB Game
31 Graduate Recognition 10:30am Worship Fall Schedule	Jun 1	2	3	4	5	6

Rev. Bruce . . . (Continued from page 2)

Thank You For Giving To The Lord

With Pentecost and the spring awakening creation, we reflect and give thanks for the Spirit's renewing power and those who awaken the church's mission.

We give thanks to those who . . .

- Invited guests to the Jets hockey social outing;
- Assisted with the Sunrise Service;
- Purchased and arranged the flowers in the Resurrection Garden;
- Installed the new wireless microphones;
- Assisted in moving the furniture in the Chancel;
- Supported and helped exceed our goal for the One Great Hour of Sharing;
- Provided soup for Souper

- Sunday and the Lenten Series;
- Attended Worship on Maundy Thursday Good Friday;
- Helped to organize and move cabinets in the storage room; Assisted with the Memorial service for Donna Liston;

- Repaired the blinds in Rev. Bruce's office;
- Supported the Crop Walk.

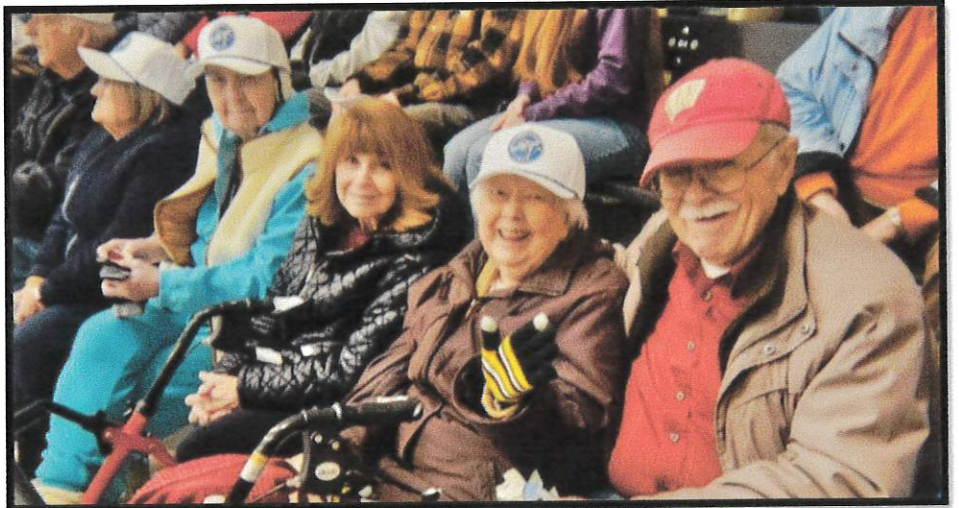
We give thanks for God's creation as the signs of new life emerge. We praise the Lord, whose spirit enriches our lives.

Jets Hockey Game Outing Proves To Be A Fun Night Out For RPC Fans

by Vicki Ott

A group of hockey fans from RPC attended their first Janesville

Jets Hockey Game at the Woodman's Sports and Convention Center on April 11.



Mary Ellen . . .

(Continued from page 1)

time with girlfriends, especially taking long weekend trips with them to Door County.

Mary Ellen's son Carl and his significant other, Thyra Fosmoen, had joined Rock Prairie a little over two years ago, and this inspired Mary Ellen to join, also.

She says she enjoys our traditional service, Rev. Bruce's sermons, and the "undeniable presence of God's love within the hearts of the members."

She says she is interested in becoming involved in church activities and hopes she can help with our November Christmas Bazaar. She also expressed interest in helping on the Mission Committee.



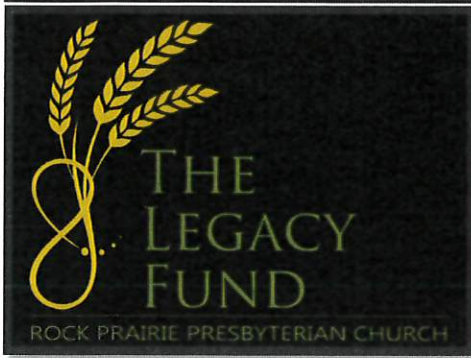
Andy Zwicky from the Jets is their group coordinator and did an outstanding job accommodating our group.

Everyone got discounted ticket prices and received a Jets hat.

The game was very exciting—it went into overtime, going into an overtime tied at 2.

After an exciting "shootout," the Jets' season came to a dramatic end.

"I think everyone had a good time and would like for us to have another outing next season," said Lindi Paull.



by Bo Plank

In Quarter 1, the Legacy Fund received contributions of \$7,823, along with a bequest of \$5,000, for a total of \$12,823.

As of March 31, the Fund's total assets stood at \$132,047, comprised of

- \$5,949 in checking;
- \$38,965 in certificates of deposit;
- \$87,133 in mutual funds.

We extend heartfelt thanks to the following donors who contributed to the Legacy Fund during the First Quarter: Will and Marti Everts, Dawn and Ed Hale, Jerry Peterson and Marge Smith-Peterson, Marge Knauer, Elaine and Bo Plank, Shirley Barlass, Marion and William Barlass, Judy Jaggard, Rev. Bruce and Krista Jones, Kay and Tom Ward, Jan and Earl Marquis, and a bequest from Arthur Nesbitt.

Ways To Contribute

Support the Legacy Fund through these options:

- **A Qualified Charitable Donation (QCD):** Through an Individual Retirement Account (IRA);
- **Cash Contributions:** Gifts of any amount are welcome at any time. Please make checks payable to "RPPC Legacy Fund";
- **Life Insurance:** Name "Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church Legacy Fund" as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy;

Communion Class Offered

by Katie Blija

Sawyer Paul, Charlotte-Sellers-Slater, and Daxton Wellnitz publicly received Communion for the first time during Worship after they had participated in an instructional class which had been of-

fered about the Sacrament.

The class will continue to be offered on an "as needed" basis.

If you would like to take the class and begin to take Communion, please contact Katie Blija or Rev. Bruce.



Rev. Bruce serves Communion Bread to Daxton Wellnitz, as Sawyer Paul and Charlotte Sellers-Slater await their turn.

- **Real Estate and Securities:** Transfer ownership of real estate, securities, or other appreciated assets to "Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church Legacy Fund."

Contributing to the Legacy Fund is a meaningful way to express your faith and commitment to the church's mission. Your donation helps ensure that the church's work continues to thrive.

Thank you for your continued support!

Note: Always consult a qualified tax advisor to ensure compliance with regulations and to maximize applicable tax benefits.

May Birthdays

May 1 Harriet Rogers

May 12 Cathy Wagner

May 12 Jared Fish

May 14 Carolyn Hart

May 20 Vicki Ott

May 23 Bill Davis

May 27 Earl Marquis

'Souper Sunday' Offers Food, Fellowship

by Kay Ward

Three "Souper Sundays" have been enjoyed by RPC members and friends in recent months, with lots of laughter, good conversation, and really good "souper" soup.

We plan to continue this event again in September, but first we need a few people to volunteer to make the soups. You will be reimbursed for the cost of the ingredients from the free-will offering.

Please call Kay Ward (608-754-2307) if you are willing to make a pot of soup in the fall.

Special thanks to Martha Johnson, Kay and Tom Ward, Krista and Bruce Jones, Delight and Russ Antos, Jeri and John Torpy, and Kristin Schultz and Jason VanMeter for being our first soup chefs.



(Above): Soup was enjoyed at a recent "Souper Sunday" by over 75 participants in the event which was offered after Worship on a Sunday morning. **(Left):** Souper Chef Russ Antos serves some of his prized recipe soup to Bob Paull.

Maundy Thursday Service Held Despite Local Stormy Weather

Despite some violent weather nearby, our congregation celebrated Maundy Thursday with some folks from 1st Presbyterian at their church in downtown Janesville.

Rev. Bruce celebrated the service with Pastor Lee Meister.

Our choir was well-represented in singing the anthems that were directed by Patti Goff.

"It was a blessing that the storm held off so we could get into the church and then was over by the time we were on our way out," said one attendee as she walked toward her undamaged car.



Easter Breakfast Delights Over 100

by Lindi Paull

A delicious Easter breakfast was enjoyed by over 100 members and friends at Rock Prairie Church following the Sunrise Service and prior to Worship.

Head Chef Dave Ott and his crew of talented helpers (Brandon Crandall, Dave Engebretson, Todd Feiler, Adam and Ed Hale, Richard Johnston, Tom Knauer, Bob Paull, Jason Van Meter, Tom Ward, and Tom Wolfe) served up a wonderful

menu of pancakes, scrambled eggs, bacon, and sausage.

Members of the Fellowship Committee provided the fruit, beverages, donut holes, and yogurt. No one left hungry, and everyone enjoyed the food and fel-

lowship provided before attending the Easter Service.

A "Free Will Offering" amounted to a generous \$470.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this wonderful event!





Progress toward the RPC "One Great Hour of Sharing" goal of \$3,000 was illustrated weekly by a display on the ramp in the Sanctuary.

OGHS Tops Goal For 2026

by Cathy Wagner

Our Rock Prairie Missions Committee set and announced a goal for our congregation to achieve for the One Great Hour of Sharing donation drive this year, and I am happy to report that we have exceeded that goal by over \$600!

Our Presbytery's General Assembly took action recently to realign and rebrand the special offerings Rock Prairie has participated in for many years.

There are three such offerings each year: One Great Hour of Sharing (during Lent), the World Communion Offering (in the fall), and the Christmas Joy Offering (during Advent.)

One Great Hour of Sharing is the single, largest way that we as Presbyterians have to come together every year to work together for a better world.

After tallying a few last-minute donations, our total amount collected was \$3,634.58, easily topping our stated goal of \$3,000.

Congratulations and thanks to all who participated!

This money will be used to

- Create possibility for people to flee their homes in search of safety;
- Support recovery efforts when disasters devastate communities;
- Empower partners to build sustainable futures;
- Walk alongside our world neighbors to work for more just immigration laws and processes.

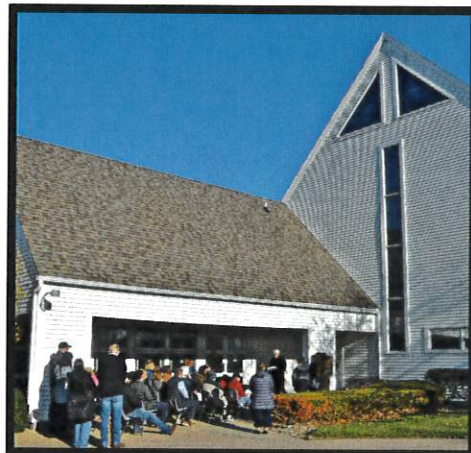
Our gifts show people that they are not alone and that people they don't know see them and care enough to respond.

Sunrise Service Held Despite Weather

About 50 people braved the weather conditions to attend an Easter Sunrise Service at 8 am. Because of the cold and blustery early morning conditions, the service was held in the circle drive entrance area rather than in the usual site, in the Memorial Garden.

Rev. Bruce, with the assistance of four youth, conducted the service prior to the Easter Breakfast

and before the Worship Service, which started at 10:30.



Easter Baskets To Share . . . (Continued from page 1)

for the Salvation Army to distribute to families in the Janesville area for Easter.

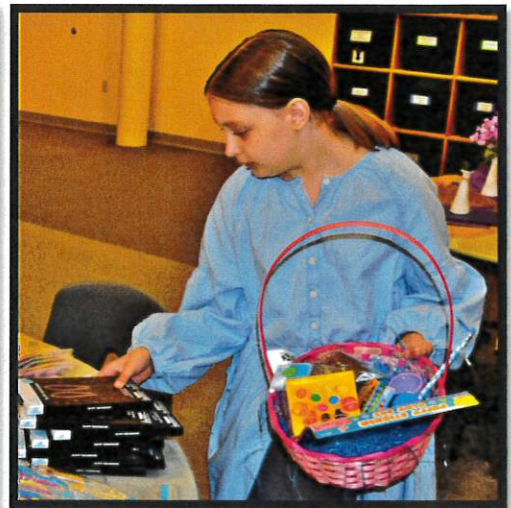
Thank you to Gail Wolfe and Bob Fulton for delivering our creations to the Salvation Army! (That many baskets and gift bags require two large vehicles!)

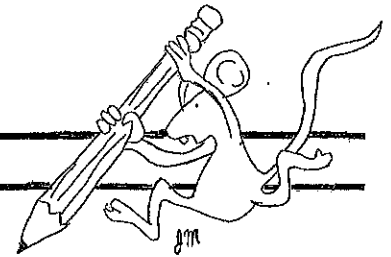
Thank you, also, to everyone

who donated candy and toys that were put into the baskets. It is due to your generosity that we were

able to continue the special Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church tradition.







The Church Mouse

Dear Friends,

Here's a bit of humor to brighten your day . . .

+ + + + +

A teenage boy had just passed his driver's exam and inquired of his father as to when they would be discussing the boy's use of the family car.

His father said he'd make a deal with his son. "You bring your grades up from a C to a B average, study your Bible a little, and cut your hair; then we'll talk about the car," he offered.

The boy thought about what his father had said for a moment, decided he's settle for the offer, and they agreed on it.

After about six weeks, his father said, "Son, you've brought your grades up, and I've observed that you have been studying the Bible. However, I'm disappointed that you haven't had your hair cut."

The boy said, "You know Dad, I've been thinking about that, and I've noticed in my studies of the Bible that Samson had long hair, John the Baptist had long hair, and there's even strong evidence that Jesus had long hair."

Dad replied, "Son, did you notice that they all walked everywhere they went?"

+ + + + +

—The Church Mouse

(This is a "Church Mouse" taken from the archives of over 30 years of columns printed in The PRAIRIE PRESS. I will be reprinting these old but still relevant and meaningful pieces until someone from the congregation comes forward and volunteers to carry on the tradition of The Church Mouse.—Ed's note)

Please deliver by May 1, 2026
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE PAID
JANESVILLE WI
PERMIT NO. 458

Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church
8605 E County Road A
Janesville WI 53546