

THE PARISH CONNECTION

March 2025

A Community of Faith, Inspired by Christ, Gathered to Grow, Empowered to Serve.

March 2025 Lectionary Readings

MAR 02 | Transfiguration Sunday (White)

Ex 34:29-35; Ps 99 (UMH 819);
2 Cor 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

MAR 05 | Ash Wednesday (Purple or Grey)

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Ps 51:1-17 (UMH 785);
2 Cor 5:20b-6:10; Matt 6:1-6, 16-21

MAR 09 | 1st Sunday in Lent; Scouting Sunday (Alternate) (Purple)

Deut 26:1-11; Ps 92:1-2, 9-16 (810);
Romans 10:8b-13; Luke 4:1-13

MAR 16 | 2nd Sunday in Lent (Purple)

Gen 15: 1-12, 17-18; Ps 27 (UMH 758);
Phil 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35

MAR 23 | 3rd Sunday in Lent (Purple)

Isa 55:1-9; Ps 63:1-8 (UMH 788);
1 Cor 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

MAR 30 | 4th Sunday in Lent; UMCOR Sunday (Purple)

Josh 5:9-12; Ps 32 (UMH 766);
2 Cor 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

IN OUR PRAYERS:

Joys—Epiphany, Beautiful Winter of Wisconsin, Snow, Youth Group Snow Tubing at Trollhaugen, Lexi, visit with Ruth, visits with Sheldon
Concerns—Stryder, Meghan, Maggie, Vern, Georgia Leverty, Ruth, Pat Lillie, Lon, all countries with wars, Gaza—especially the children, Jamie, Todd, Ardys, Edison, Betty, Mary, Libby, Julie, Gloria, Roger L, Holly, Alison's friend, Barb's family, Lori, Harry, Elaine Bannink, Terry, LeRoy & Barb, Debbie Stevens, Penny Warner, Bev's boys, Larry, Vicki, Mary K, Gary, Bourne, Paula, Carol, Deb, Adam, Sheldon, migrants, immigrants, and refugees under the threat of forced deportation, and Victims of Flight in D.C. and Philadelphia, Scott, Linda
Remembering—Family and friends of Royce Austinson and Bill Millermon

Daylight Savings Time

begins on Sunday, March 9th. Please remember to set your clocks ahead one hour on Saturday night before you go to bed.



Zoom: Please use the following information to join us on Sundays for worship at **8:30 a.m.**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88613652777?pwd=UlpSVhGN0g1Qnc3VDV5T0Jhci83UT09>
Meeting ID: 886 1365 2777 Passcode: 421072

Willow River Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/Willow-River-Parish-103076225619623/>. Please send any information you would like posted to Heather Greene mr.mrs.greene5@gmail.com or Gail Kuhl kuhlg@cltcomm.net

Lenten Activities & Very Short Message

Join us every Wednesday during Lent for a time of reflection, fellowship, and meaningful activities! Locations rotate weekly – All are welcome to join!

Schedule of Events:

- March 5 – Faith Family: Ash Wednesday Service
- March 12 – Deer Park: Lenten Hymn Sing
- March 19 – Clear Lake: Lenten Puzzle Night
- March 26 – Clear Lake: Lenten Yoga
- April 2 – Deer Park: Lenten Play
- April 9 – Clear Lake: Lenten Garden
- April 17 – Faith Family: Maundy Thursday Service

6:00PM – Soup Supper

7:00 PM Lenten Activities & Very Short Message (Yes, we promise—very short!)

Bring your children, grandchildren, and neighbors! Let's come together as a faith community to reflect on the meaning of Lent and share this special season with loved ones.

During winter, when harsh weather comes due to too low temperatures or heavy snow and each church decides to close, we will have a Zoom worship at 10 a.m.

March Birthdays

Bev Klatt	3/2
Oliver Malack	3/4
Esther Kim	3/5
Gracie Perkins Greene	3/8
Dennis Petersen	3/9
Joyce Petersen	3/14
Greg Severson	3/15
Fernandez Johnson	3/17
George Stutter	3/18
Todd Jilek	3/19
Evan Min	3/19
Elden Setter	3/20
Jewel Severson	3/26
Jan Benson	3/27
Tara Hemauer	3/29

March Anniversaries

Roger & Carla La Blanc	3/20
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Ruby's Pantry distributes food at Pop-Up Pantry locations across MN & WI. There is no income or residency requirement and for a \$25 bundle donation you will receive an abundance of groceries. One food distribution will take place **March 8th** in the **SMC LTD** parking lot at 9000 Griffin Street E in Amery. This is a drive-thru distribution from **7:30 am to 9:00 am**. Volunteers are greatly appreciated and should arrive at **6:45 am**. If you would like to volunteer or if you would like more information, please contact 715-268-7390 or email office.ameryucc@gmail.com.

Another Ruby's Pantry location is: 1245 County Highway CC, New Richmond, Wisconsin 54017, which distributes on the **3rd Thursday** of the Month. Registration begins at 5:00 PM. Food bundles available **5:00-7:00 PM**. Hosted by: Faith Community Church. Check out their website www.rubyspantry.org to find a location and time that works for you.

Willow River Parish Youth

Youth will meet at the Avery home on Saturday, March 1st at 6:30 pm for movie night, snacks and discussion.

UMC Special Sundays: Listed below are the special Sundays for 2025. Donation envelopes will be at the back of the churches.

- UMCOR Sunday ~ March 30
 - Native American Ministries Sunday ~ May 4
 - Peace with Justice Sunday ~ June 15
 - World Communion Sunday ~ October 5
 - United Methodist Student ~ November 30
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WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Clear Lake

March 2nd Reader: Ben Avery Jr.
Acolyte/PwrPt: Lily Avery
Potluck: John & Stacia

March 9th Reader: Diane Blanchard
Acolyte/PwrPt: Ben Avery Jr.
Coffee: Joan L/Dick D

March 16th Reader: Dawn Cress
Acolyte/PwrPt: Oliver Wood
Coffee: Justin/Josy Wood

March 23rd Reader: Andrea Jilek
Acolyte/PwrPt: Jordan Blanchard
Coffee: Jennie K/Becky R

March 30th Reader: Debi Ahrens
Acolyte/PwrPt: Oliver Gorres
Coffee: Dylan/Erin Gorres

April 6th Reader: Alison Blanchard
Acolyte/PwrPt: Lily Avery
Coffee: Debi Ahrens

Counters for March: Diane & ?

Counters for April: Carla L & Roger B

Faith Family

March 2nd Debbie Stevens
March 9th Michael Clark
March 16th Paul Webster
March 23rd Terri Wilson
March 30th Debbie Stevens
April 6th Michael Clark

April Newsletter Deadline is March 27th



Dear WRP Family,

Yay! God has borne good fruit in my ministry journey. I am delighted to share that I have passed the ordination interview, and the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) has recommended me for ordination as an Elder in Full Connection at the 2025 Wisconsin Annual Conference.

Although this is a moment I have long awaited, when I first heard the news, I was both joyful and in disbelief. However, it is no longer a secret that I am eagerly looking forward to the Annual Conference in Middleton this June. 😊 Adding to my joy, my parents will be visiting Wisconsin this summer to celebrate this special moment with me.

When should I say this journey began? From the perspective of Prevenient Grace, was it when I was still in my mother's womb? Or when I was baptized at seven months old? Perhaps it was during my childhood when I held my parents' hands and prayed with them at church in the evenings? Or was it in high school when I first strongly experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit? Maybe it was during my undergraduate years at Methodist Theological University in Seoul, when I studied philosophy of religion and served as a student pastor in the Korean Methodist Church (KMC)?

There have been many moments that shaped me and led me on this journey, but if I were to mark the official beginning of my path in The United Methodist Church (UMC), it would likely be January 2018, when I moved to the U.S., right after getting married, to study at Claremont School of Theology in Southern California.

Coming from KMC, the first step for me in UMC was to become a member, which required attending a local UMC for at least a year. After becoming a UMC member, I was approved as a candidate at the Charge Conference, beginning the candidacy process, which lasts at least one year. During this time, I was assigned a mentor pastor by the conference and went through a discernment process, learning about UMC doctrine, calling, and ordination. I also completed a psychological evaluation and two rounds of interviews with the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCOM) to become a Certified Candidate and Licensed Local Pastor.

At that time, in California-Pacific Conference, it was common for most candidates to fail the DCOM interview at least once or twice, meaning they had to wait another year to try again. However, since I was on a student visa, I could not afford to wait an extra year. With no choice but to rely fully on God, I prayed fervently and did my best to prepare. By God's grace, in March 2020, I passed the interview and was approved as a Certified Candidate and Local Pastor. That same month, my son was born. 😊 But the joy was short-lived as the COVID-19 pandemic struck, forcing most churches to shut down.

By May, I was nearing graduation and wanted to serve a church in UMC, but the situation was challenging. Just as I was preparing to return to Korea, I received an invitation from the Wisconsin Conference, and in September of that difficult year, I came to serve and meet all of you.

Beginning ministry in Wisconsin was a new challenge that required much learning and adaptation. In many ways, the church became my new school. As I served in Willow River Parish, I continually prayed and discerned God's plan for my calling. At that time, my prayer was:

"Lord, I believe You have called me from Seoul, South Korea, to California, and now to this place. With this faith, I will proceed with my Provisional Membership application. Please walk with me through this process, and may I remain obedient to Your will regardless of the outcome. Let every step of this journey be an opportunity for growth and learning."

After interviews with DCOM and BOM, I was approved for Provisional Membership. At the 2022 Annual Conference, I was commissioned as a Provisional Member. That moment reaffirmed God's calling on my life.

During my three-year Provisional Residency, I met with my mentors monthly, deeply reflecting on UMC doctrine and developing my own theology. I had to regularly attend workshops at Pine Lake United Methodist Camp in Westfield and continued my ministry while caring for my family. Serving three churches in a place far from family, relatives, and Korean friends was not easy. There were times when I doubted my calling and felt like giving up. But each time, through prayer, I surrendered everything to God and took one step at a time.

After submitting all the necessary paperwork to BOM, I faced my Ordination Interview in February. Just as in previous stages, it was common for many candidates to be deferred once or twice. However, as a religious worker on a visa, I knew that waiting another year or two was not an option for me. Once again, I entrusted everything to God while doing my utmost to prepare.

Please do not misunderstand—I do not share this to boast about my own ability to complete the ordination process. Every step of the way, I felt my shortcomings more than anyone else. I was nervous, anxious, and utterly dependent on God in my preparation. Yet, time and time again, I have experienced God's grace and guidance in my calling.

Now, having passed my ordination interview, I am preparing to be officially recognized before God and the church community at the upcoming Annual Conference. This is not just my personal achievement but my testimony of faith and my witness to God's work throughout this journey. I no longer have any doubts about God's calling. I believe that God has led and guided my life up to this point.

I am incredibly grateful for the relationships we have built in WRP, the trust we have formed, and the love and support I have received from all of you.

However, I still need your prayers. In order to continue serving as an ordained pastor and remain focused on my ministry, I need to obtain permanent residency (Green Card). Due to the complexities of the current immigration policies, securing a Green Card has become extremely difficult. This is not only a personal issue but also a challenge that many immigrant clergy across various UMC Conferences are facing.

Some of you may be aware of this situation, while others may not know the full details. I would like to share a UMC news article titled "The Status Issues of Immigrant Clergy" that explains the issue well. I encourage you to read it when you have time and to join me in praying for immigrant clergy who are struggling with these challenges, so that we may continue to answer God's call and build the Kingdom of God in this earth.

Thank you for your prayers and support.

With gratitude, Pastor Hakki

Deer Park UMC News

Send Offering to: Janice Thompson, 110 North Street E, Deer Park, WI 54007

Noisy Can--1st Quarter to Various Charities

Clear Lake UMC News

- Coffee and pot luck **BEFORE** church at 10:15
- Potluck-1st Sunday of each month **BEFORE** church.
- Food shelf donations any Sunday

Send Offering to: Josy Wood, 260 40th Avenue, Clear Lake, WI 540045

CL Noisy Cans: 1st qtr.- Lifeline Food Pantry
2nd Qtr-Clear Lake Community Center
3rd Qtr.- Family House (Polk/Barron Shelter)
4th Qtr- Salvation Army

Shop with RaiseRight (formerly Scrip): If you want to place a Raise Right order, please contact Andrea Jilek 263-2575. Nilssen's gift cards can be ordered at any time, too.

Clear Lake Church Cancellations: Winter is here; in the event of bad weather, please contact Roger Blanchard 715-263-2690 or 715-607-4246 to find out if worship services are canceled.

Clear Lake Sunday School is trying something new this year- "Bible in a Binder", Kids can come into church and grab a binder and work on it after the children's sermon. The scripture for the day will be reinforced with what they find in the binder.

In February, our Mid week youth met and found scriptures on love, wrote and watercolored on doilies that were given with cookies they baked and decorated to church members and friends they wanted to share a lil love with!

Dorcas Piecemakers Work Days: On Monday, March 3rd we will meet at Irma's for lunch at noon and then sew from 1-3. On Monday, March 24th we will meet at Irma's for lunch at noon then sew from 1:00 -3:00. All are welcome to join us just for lunch or lunch and sewing, ironing, and putting fabrics together.

Bell Choir: Back at practice now on Sundays during Lent beginning March 9th. We will meet at 7 pm.

United Women in Faith met in February to look at history information and begin plans for our 150th Anniversary in 2026. Next event will be April 9th with bingo at Amery Memory Care. Be there at 1:15; starts at 1:30. Joan is bringing lemon cake. Bring sweet treats for prizes. No meetings for a while.

Holy Socks

The United Women of Faith are gathering clean, mismatched, old, worn out holy socks for a cash donation to Northcott Neighborhood House in Milwaukee. We'd love to have anyone's donations.

CL UMC February Ad Council Minutes

Old Business:

1. The prep for the baked potatoes at the Winter Market is Friday February 7 at 10:00 at the church. The potatoes will be ready by 10:30 February 8.
2. Due to the Lenten Services Ad Council for March and April are scheduled for Sunday March 2 and Sunday April 6 after church.
3. Men's Group is currently in the planning stages. Roger will notify the men of the Church when the first meeting will take place. Planning on meeting quarterly.

4. MIA (Methodists in Action) is scheduled for Wednesday February 19 after school. They will be handing out hats and gloves. The location to be determined.

New Business:

1. Church 150th Anniversary celebration taking place in 2026 will be held on a combined 5th Sunday. Need to start planning for the celebration.
2. Church cleaning - Betty Rake will get an estimate from Domestic Divas.
3. Josy Wood, Debi Ahrens, Carla LeBlanc, and Diane Blanchard are working on the 2024 Statistical Report that is due the end of February. Josy will submit on line when completed.
4. Debi is checking on new signage for outside the church. The company from Barron has still not submitted a bid.
5. Hospitality from Mission Statement - will continue reaching out to inactive members. Also will continuously update our brochure and Facebook page as needed.
6. Passing the Peace - it will be up to the individual if you want to shake hands or hug or just want to do the peace sign during the flu season.

Lenten Services:

- A motion was made by Jennie and 2nd by Diane to offer to provide soup and sandwich supper and host the Lenten services to Faith Family and Deer Park.
- Pastor is focusing on having a simple message along with activities that everyone can participate in. A complete schedule of events is not finalized but the plan is March 12 a hymn sing, March 19 puzzles relating to the message, April 17 Maundy Thursday sardar meal with washing of hands.
- Pastor will ask our youth if they would like to be a Liturgist. It will be volunteer only.

Pastor's Notes:

- Pastor Hakki will have his Ordination Interview February 11-12 at Pine Lake UM camp. We wish him luck.
- Pastor Hakki will be on vacation February 18 - 26. Paul Webster will be Pulpit supply. Pastor Tim from New Centerville UMC will be the emergency contact.

SPRING THRIFT SALE: Start Saving for our April 24th & 25th Thrift Sale.

Faith Family Church News:

-**Pancake Breakfast: April 13th 9-1pm** with a Palm Sunday service on Saturday April 12th at 5:00pm. Set up for the breakfast at 4:00pm.

-Noisy Cans: Cancer research, Grace Place, Autism Awareness, WestCap Food Pantry,

-Easter Community Event: We have some plastic eggs to donate, considering donating a bike or other basket items to the church for the event.

-Lenten Services: we will provide soup, sandwiches and dessert for our services in Emerald.

-Wisconsin Conference is in Middleton this year.

-Still in need of more liturgists/readers.

-Newsletter: If you have anything to put in the newsletter, inform Anitra or let Heather know.

Next Meeting: Thursday March 13th at 6:00pm.

Fun Day School Kids:

The kids have been enjoying game night with a Bible lesson. We even made it to McDonalds for one of our game nights. It was a lot of fun!



COMMUNITY SERVICE: Easter is coming up we can start collecting items for Easter Baskets.

Community Events:

Next Community Event will be the Saturday before Easter, Easter Egg hunt.

PANCAKE BREAKFAST: April 13th 9-1pm: come enjoy some delicious pancakes, eggs and sausages. (in need of volunteers to service / make breakfast, clean up, and get supplies)

CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK:

[Faith Family Church | Facebook](#)

Noisy Can—Cancer Research (In Memory of those we have lost and in honor of those battling)

Send Offering to: Terri Wilson: 3127 200th Ave
Glenwood City, WI 54013

The Status Issues of Immigrant Clergy



Every person who embarks on life as an immigrant in the United States must overcome a significant hurdle: obtaining legal status that allows them to freely engage in economic activities and settle in the country. This means securing a work visa or permanent residency. This challenge applies to immigrant clergy as well. Many first-generation immigrant pastors in The United Methodist Church (UMC) began their journey on a student visa (F-Visa) during their studies, transitioned to a religious visa (R-Visa), and later resolved their status through either religious permanent residency (EB-4) or employment-based permanent residency (EB-2). Like other employment-based immigration processes, the religious immigration process also requires sponsorship, which was typically provided by either the local church or the conference. Financially well-established Korean churches generally became sponsors for their pastors, supporting them in obtaining religious or employment-based permanent residency. For pastors in Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry (CRCC), it was often difficult for local churches to provide financial sponsorship, so the conference stepped in to resolve their status issues. In recent years, as many conferences faced difficulties in recruiting pastors, they actively provided sponsorship for young Korean pastors, supporting their R-Visas and EB-4 religious permanent residencies. Through this process, many pastors in the UMC have secured the legal status necessary to live as immigrants, allowing them to faithfully respond to God's call.

However, [significant changes occurred after March 2023](#). Due to an administrative action by the U.S. Department of State, the door to religious permanent residency effectively closed, preventing many pastors from applying for EB-4 religious permanent residency. The EB-4 category for employment-based immigration includes not only religious workers but also special immigrants, such as special immigrant juveniles (SIJ) and other designated groups. Administratively, [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\) has maintained a quota system that limits the number of green cards issued to certain countries with high immigration demand](#). Until March 2023, this quota

was applied to three South American countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) in the special immigrant juvenile process under the EB-4 category. As a result, even if there were many SIJ applicants, it did not affect religious green card applicants. In other words, once a green card petition (I-360) was approved, the pastor could submit an I-485 green card application at any time because the Visa Bulletin from the U.S. Department of State consistently showed a "C" (current) status for religious workers, meaning applications were being accepted.

However, in March 2023, [the Department of State revealed that an administrative error had occurred in the SIJ process and announced the removal of the green card quota for the three South American countries](#). This merged the previously separate lines into one, meaning religious green card applicants now had to join the same queue. This queue has grown so long that it is fair to say the EB-4 religious permanent residency process is effectively over. As of January 2025, according to [the February 2025 Visa Bulletin](#), the filing date for the I-485 green card application for EB-4 religious workers is February 1, 2021. This means that only those who filed their I-360 petitions before February 1, 2021, are eligible to apply for a green card. In other words, only those who submitted and were approved for an I-360 petition four years ago are now eligible to file an I-485 application. This is why the door for religious permanent residency for pastors is effectively closed.

To submit an I-360 petition, the applicant must have served at the sponsoring church or conference for at least two years under an R-1 religious visa or another employment-eligible status (such as CPT or OPT). Therefore, those who filed their I-360 petitions four years ago must have started their ministry six years prior. The problem is that the R-1 religious visa, including one extension, has a maximum validity of five years. Under the current visa bulletin, it takes six years to apply for religious permanent residency, meaning R-1 visa holders are logically unable to apply for an EB-4 green card within the five-year limit. Regardless of the outcome of the green card approval, if an I-485 application could be submitted, R-1 visa holders could remain in the U.S. even if their R-1 visa expired, and once the work and travel permit (commonly known as a combo card) was approved, they could continue to work and receive a salary before their green card was granted. However, under the current situation where they cannot even file an I-485 application, they must leave the U.S. as soon as their R-1 visa expires. Some pastors are taking a break from

ministry to return to school, while others are permanently returning to Korea. This is the current reality many pastors are facing.

Is there a solution to this situation? The issue of clergy status has been ongoing for two years, and efforts to find solutions are still in progress. For example, the New England Annual Conference was the first to recognize the status issues faced by immigrant clergy, prompted by concerns raised by the Asian Caucus, and proposed a conference-level solution. The conference decided to support employment-based immigration (EB-2) instead of religious immigration (EB-4), centralizing legal assistance to resolve status issues. The New York Annual Conference, to which I belong, also raised concerns through the Korean Caucus, following the New England Annual Conference model, and received a commitment of support from the conference. After lengthy discussions with conference staff, immigration attorneys, and those directly affected, the decision was made to wait for the reopening of the EB-4 category. In the meantime, the conference would assist in transitioning R-1 religious visas to H-1B work visas. Given that each conference and individual pastor's situation is different, finding a one-size-fits-all solution to status issues is not easy.

However, there is something we must all remember in resolving this issue: this is not something an individual pastor can solve on their own. It is not an issue that can be resolved by a small group of affected individuals banding together. Greater attention and solidarity are needed. Korean caucuses in each conference must take the lead, and we must unite with other ethnic caucuses as well. If necessary, we must join forces with other denominations or religious groups facing similar challenges. To persuade the conferences, we need a forum where we can share information and experiences. This topic must become a major agenda item at the Korean Association of the United Methodist Church and be addressed not just at the conference level but at the General Conference level. Above all, this issue cannot be ignored once a pastor's status is resolved. This is not just a matter for one pastor; it is a pressing issue for our entire Korean community and will remain a challenge for the future.

Rev. Jinha Choi is serving at First & Wesley United Methodist Church in New York Annual Conference.



THE WILLOW RIVER PARISH
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Willow River Facebook Page
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Hakki Min, Pastor
Office Hours: Tues-Friday 9-11 am

Anitra Kaczmariski, Parish Secretary
Email: wrpsecretary@gmail.com

Amanda Millermon, Parish Treasurer
Email: WRParishconnect@gmail.com

Sunday Worship
8:30 a.m. – Faith Family (also Zoom) 9:45 a.m. – Deer Park
11:00 a.m. – Clear Lake

Church School @ Faith Family & Clear Lake
“Fun Day” School– Alternate Wednesdays 7 pm @ Faith Family
Bible in a Binder Sundays @ Clear Lake