

The Friendly Communicator

July 2026

A Word from the Pastor

This July 4th, our nation turns 250 years old — a milestone that invites us not simply to celebrate our *past* but also to reflect on who we are called to become in our *future*.

As American Baptists, we have a deep stake in one of our nation's most precious values: religious freedom. Long before the First Amendment was written, Baptist minister Roger Williams was already paying the price for insisting that faith must be free. Banished from Massachusetts in the mid-1630s for arguing that government had no business dictating matters of conscience, Williams founded Providence, Rhode Island — the first colonial government to guarantee liberty of conscience for all people. That heritage runs in our veins. We did not simply benefit from religious freedom; we helped build it.

As we mark 250 years of this American experiment, I find myself returning to the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3. Standing before a king who demanded they bow to his golden image or face the furnace, their answer was breathtaking in its clarity:

“King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter...the God we serve is able to deliver us..., and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16-18)

That is what a free conscience before God looks like — not defiant for defiance's sake, but immovable when ultimate allegiance is at stake. Roger Williams understood this. So did the founders who enshrined religious liberty in our Constitution. And so do we, as we give thanks for the freedom to worship according to the dictates of our own hearts.

As Baptists, we call this “soul freedom.” Freedom is not a passive inheritance — it is something we are called to steward wisely and extend to others. This Independence Day, I encourage each of us to hold our national anniversary with both gratitude for what we have received and a renewed commitment to ensuring that liberty remains available to all.

This July also brings one of the most exciting events of our summer: **Vacation Bible School**, offered in collaboration with our neighbors at **First United Methodist Church** (7520 West Lapham Street, West Allis). VBS runs **July 20–24, 2026, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm** and is open to youth ages 5–14.

Registration forms are available in the church office. We also need **volunteers** to help make this week possible! Reach out to Catherine or anyone on our Christian Education team to sign up.

As we fire up the grills and watch the fireworks this July, may we carry with us a quiet awareness of how much has been given to us — and how much is still asked of us. Happy 250th, America!

Grateful for the freedom to believe; committed to protecting it for all,

Pastor Stephen

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May 2026 Financial Income Report

General Receipts

Envelopes	\$8,960.00
Loose Offerings	46.00
Church School	88.00
Birthday	0.00
Total	\$9,094.00

Miscellaneous Receipts

Pow wow	50.00
MMCC	400.00
Bell Luncheon	150.00
Total	\$600.00

Communion Offering

Camp Tamarack	175.00
Grand Ave. Club	10.00
Total	\$185.00

Memorial Fund

Bonnie Bell	525.00
Total	\$525.00

Mission Offering

America for Christ	50.00
One Great Hour of Sharing	260.00
Milwaukee Community Crossroads	300.00
Total	\$610.00

Deposited Total \$11,014.00

July Birthdays

- 1 Judith Borger
- 2 Dorothy Phinney
- 2 Becky Holl
- 6 Doug Nowakowski
- 12 Gloria Hernandez
- 16 Nancy Koss
- 20 Jane Zunker
- 22 Brayden House
- 26 Bethany Gross
- 27 Marie Paprocki
- 30 Mike Shawgo

July Anniversaries

- 5 Rick & Kathy Vichich, 52 years
- 11 Ted Hertel, Jr. & Maggie Ley, 40 years
- 14 Craig & Becky Holl, 25 years
- 23 Justin & Chrissy Thayer, 21 years

If we have inadvertently missed your special day, please accept our apologies, and let the office know so we can change our records.

Suggested items for the third Sunday (July 19) food and hygiene collection for the Milwaukee Christian Center are **whole grain noodles & feminine products**. Please place your donations in the bins inside the office door entrance.

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Annual Bike Ride

It's time to tune up your bicycles for the 16th Annual First Baptist Church Bike Ride on the Hank Aaron State Trail. We'll meet at the church bike rack at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, August 1. Bicyclists of all abilities are welcome. Please supply your own bicycle and helmet. We'll adjust the length of the bike ride to accommodate all who show up at the church on August 1.

July Communion Offering

The Communion Offering for July is designated for the **Eras Senior Network**, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to engage and support seniors, adults with disabilities, and family caregivers in leading meaningful lives. Please give generously.

The annual
Corn Roast
is coming on
August 23 at 11:30 am
on the Church Lawn.
Save the date.

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The hymns we sing each week come from all times and places. Some are from the 1700's (think "Come, thou Fount of Every Blessing" or "Amazing Grace") and some are from the 2000's (think "His Mercy is More" or "In Christ Alone.") They can be hymns that reflect our Baptist heritage or hymns that remind us of the global body of Christ. Time and place are important criteria for the hymns we choose to sing but the most important part is that they enhance the worship, teach us our faith, and motivate us to live out the gospel.

In the last 25 years, as churches moved away from congregational singing, they lost the important aspect of community. Along with that, they lost following the biblical example of worship, bringing all generations together, and teaching theology. Thankfully, many churches are beginning to recognize the need for hymns that **everyone** can sing and are encouraging inclusion of hymns in worship.

Check out the hymnals in the pew. Look at the depth and breadth of the hymns that are included. And when we come together to worship, sing with your whole heart!

Mary Schecher

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Our church picnic had fantastic weather, delicious food and great company. Thanks to everyone who helped set up tables and chairs, brought food to share, or stayed to clean up. A special Thanks to Pete, the grill master, as well. It's always nice to spend time in fellowship together.

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Golden Guys and Gals: Members of the 3G's: Please mark your calendars for 11:00 a.m., Wednesday, September 23, 2026. That's the day we'll enjoy our annual picnic at the home of Debb and Jeff Jaeck on beautiful Phantom Lake in Mukwonago. After the picnic, we'll cruise the lake with Jeff as captain and Debb as guide to the history and wildlife of the area. Please see the September edition of the *Friendly Communicator* for further details.

