

YOUTH EVENTS

Confirmation Retreat (7-9th Grades) January 19-21

The dates were given at the Confirmation Kick Off Event. I assume ALL kids are going on the retreat unless I hear otherwise. I understand there is a basketball conflict for some of the boys, so please let me know if they will be late or not coming at all. The cost for the Confirmation Retreat is \$90 per student for the weekend, but reduced to \$45 for church families who pledge. This must be prepaid by us so please let us know by December 31 if your child is NOT coming. I will need at least one more male chaperone. Please let me know if you can join us. Our retreat this year is a service retreat to Minneapolis and includes lots of cool opportunities to serve, eat ethnic foods and worship at an African American church. This trip is always one of the highlights of the confirmation experience.

Chaperones so far: Pastor Chris, Scott Sippel, Jolene Sullivan, Anne Tuveson, Laura Anderson and church interns, Wes, Kaye, Chloe and Katy.

Pre-Confirmation Retreat (Grade 6) February 9-10 to a waterpark in Eau Claire—Due to some scheduling conflicts we are trying to reschedule the 6th grade retreat to Eau Claire. Stay tuned! Question to Diana Villeneuve or JaNae Westrich

High School Youth Outing—On **Sunday, January 28** after the late worship service, all High School Youth are invited to lunch and then time at the new UWRF Climbing Wall. No experience necessary. Cost is \$10 for lunch and the climbing. Join us and you can bring a friend too! Questions to JaNae Westrich.

WELLNESS

Yoga Class & Meditation-Mindfulness—Yoga will be held each **Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00-10:00 am**. DVDs with Jan's yoga lessons will be used during the winter months. Come and join this wonderful group!

FINANCIAL

Treasurer's Report

	<u>Dec 31, 2017</u>
General Fund Income	\$ 442,846.51
General Fund Expenses	<u>435,456.21</u>
Net Income	\$ 7,390.30

A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office

*A new budget will be approved at the Feb 4 Annual Mtg.

E-Giving—It is quick, easy & safe. It is designed to help both you with your home budgeting & financing of church ministries which continue even when you are away. Contact Missy (missy@firstchurchrf.org) with questions. If you give electronically, please use the e-giving bookmark in the pew as the offering plate goes by.

ASYLUM COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Ecumenical Asylum Committee has been offered a family from the same group of volunteers who sent us Heidi and the children. A 20 year old named Ruth and her 2 month old daughter survived the walk from Honduras through Mexico to one of the border shelters. She turned herself in at the border, was paroled immediately, and will be here in January. Her lawyer fees for asylum will not be waived this time, but they have been covered by a generous donor. We will not need monthly rent since Barb and Gus will host her in their lower level apartment. The diapers have been donated as have all the baby's needs. This one will be easy. We will just need to feed, clothe, and befriend her thanks to the de Souzas. We may need a kitchen table or dresser still, but everything else is ready. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to talk to Barb or Bobbie anytime.

JANUARY 14, 2017

No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!

As Jesus' courageous disciples, living God's grace, we strive to...

WORSHIP FAITHFULLY

Sunday Volunteers Needed

Liturgists for: Feb 4, 11, 18, 25

Welcomers for: Jan 14, 21, 28;

Feb 4, 11, 18, 25

Coffee Fellowship for: Feb 11, 18, 25

The sign-up sheets are on the back table. Thank you!

Worship Service on Channel 16—The Sunday worship service can be viewed on River Falls public access channel 16 on **Wed at 9 pm & Thurs at 12 pm**. Thanks to Jeff Hoffman who is leading the team to record the weekly worship service. He is in need of a few more volunteers. Contact him jeffhoffman312@gmail.com or 715-425-5633.

Church Office Hours—The church office hours between Labor Day and Memorial Day are: Mon-Thurs: 8:30 am-4:00 pm; Friday: 8:30 am-Noon

WELCOME OPENLY

Wednesday Meals—Join us each Wednesday night for a healthy, home cooked family meal in the fellowship hall. Cost is \$7 per person with a max of \$30 per family. **Please sign up by Tuesday at noon** so we have enough food. Please also sign up to help set, serve or clean up. Join us as a church family each **Wednesday, 5:15 to 6:15 pm**.

Jan 17—Parmesan crusted chicken, rice, salad, croissants
Jan 24—Roast beef, mashed potatoes & gravy, veggies, rolls and butter

Jan 31—Meatloaf, mashed potatoes & gravy, veggies and bread

WELCOME OPENLY

Book Group Meeting—**Tues, Jan 23: The Underground Railroad, Colson Whitehead**. Chronicles a young slave's adventures as she makes a desperate bid for freedom in the antebellum South. Winner of Pulitzer Prize & National Book Award. Meeting is at the church at 3:00 pm.

2018 Pledges are Due!

Please turn in your blue 2018 pledge sheets today. Copies are on the sign-up table.

Annual Reports Due—All Committees, please submit your Annual Reports, preferably electronically, to Missy Luedtke at missy@firstchurchrf.org. Thank you!

Annual Meeting—The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be **Sunday, February 4** following the late 10:30 am worship service in the Fellowship Hall. In addition to the regular business of reports and elected officers, many of our church teams and committees will be presenting 3 minute snapshots of their work last year and goals for 2018. Lunch is served and childcare is available. Please sign up!



Yee Ling Photography

Music at First Church will kick off the 2018 concert series with an afternoon of cello and marimba music featuring the talented father/daughter duo Sachiya and Eri Isomura! Sachiya Isomura trained at Julliard in New York and the Toho School of Music in Tokyo.

He played cello with the Minnesota Orchestra for 38 years. His daughter, Eri Isomura is a performer and instructor of piano, percussion and marimba. Please join us at the church on **January 28 at 3:00 pm** for an afternoon of music, followed by a reception and refreshments.

Save Christmas Cards—Rather than recycling 2017 Christmas cards, please save used Christmas cards that children could use for art projects. Please bring them to the office.

New to Church?—Are you a first time visitor? Please stop at the welcome table in the gathering area to receive a special welcome gift from us!

WELCOME OPENLY

Spirit and Health—If you are interested in joining a group focusing on our spiritual growth together around body issues (weight, exercise, health, image), we will begin meeting on **Wednesdays at 6:00 pm**. The first meeting will be **January 10th**. Join us when you can. If you have questions, please contact Rebecca Ferguson, at (262) 227-1542 or rebeccaferguson@hotmail.com



Survivors & Thriving After Cancer—Are you a cancer survivor? Did you learn something about treatment, strategies for coping, how to keep your faith strong during treatment? Would you be willing to share your insights with other folks? As a congregation we are developing a list of people who have survived cancer with the hope that those who have been diagnosed can turn to them for advice and support. If wish to be a part of this group, please contact the church office (office@firstchurchrf.org) with your name, email, phone number & type of cancer you are willing to talk about. Bless you for considering being a part of this ministry of healing.

Cribbage Night—The group meets on the second Tuesday at the church. Players are asked to donate \$2 and the group decides which charity to donate it to. Playing time starts at **7:00 pm**. All players & abilities welcome. The group will continue again on **February 13**.

WANTED: Coffee Fellowship Hosts—We are in need of people to sign up for Coffee Fellowship. We all know what an enjoyable & important part of our Sunday worship this is. If you have questions, contact Lu Lueck at 715-781-0138

WANTED: Welcomers—We are looking for people to welcome worshippers as they enter the church. It's a fun job & requires nothing but a handshake, a smile & a warm welcome. Please consider signing up.

Did you remember your Name Tag?—We are fortunate to have lots of guests these days & lots of new members & a few of us who just easily forget names! Remember to wear your name tag! (Yes, dig it out of your purse or pocket, take it off the fridge, pick it up from your dresser & if you just can't find it, request a new one) We're glad to know you!

GROW SPIRITUALLY

Adult Forum—*The forum meets Sundays 9:00–10:00 am*

Jan 14: Dramatic Presentation: Galatians, Alan Tuchtenhagen—Many of the first hearers of Paul's letter to the Galatians would have heard it read aloud as a full letter. Dr. David Rhoads, New Testament scholar, has committed the entire letter to memory. The forum will view a video of Dr. Rhoads presenting the letter as if he were Paul.

Jan 21 & 28: What's your Spiritual Impact? Rebecca Ferguson—Building on Pastor Chris' recent forum on "Planning Your Good Funeral," we will explore how we can share our spiritual insights with others now and at the end of our lives. Based on Daniel Taylor's *Creating a Spiritual Legacy*—and the reality that we all have stories and wisdom to offer to others, this will be an active workshop designed for all ages. Come for either or both sessions.

Feb 4: Serving the Community: SART, SART Resource People—SART is the Sexual Assault Response Team. SART provides medical exams, offers education and advocates for survivors of domestic abuse, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation in the St. Croix Valley community. Come to learn about SART's work, vision, goals and challenges. Courtney Bouthilet and Ellen Honsa will lead the discussion.

Tuesday Bible Study: All Are Welcome! - The Adult Bible Study group meets on **Tuesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm**. The focus is the Old Testament. The discussion is lively & the company is excellent. Books are available for \$28.00. Talk with Stacy Myers for more information.

Announcing Summer Dates—Even though it is still cold outside, it is time to start making summer plans.

The Musical (completed grades 1–8)
June 18–21, 9:00 am–12:00 noon
(performance on June 21 at 6:30 pm)

VBS (pre-school–completed grade 5)
July 30–August 2, 9:00 am–11:30 am

Please remember that we will need many, many adult and teen volunteers to help with VBS. Mark your calendars now!

SERVE GENEROUSLY

Save Your Family Fresh Receipts!—ARC gets \$1,000 for every \$150,000 in receipts, so every dollar counts. ARC is the agency funded by local churches to help address the immediate needs of people in our community (rent, utility, gas, repair help). A box for receipts is on the back table.

Adult Back Bay Mission Trip—March 18-24, 2018

It's time again to plan for a trip to Back Bay Mission to help with housing rehab, day shelter, food shelf, and serving meals at Loaves & Fishes. It's a life-changing experience so consider taking a week and helping the homeless, meeting new people, eating really good food! \$50 deposit holds your spot. Contact Carol Merriman with questions.

Among Friends, located here at church, provides a social respite for individuals with dementia & their caregivers. We are open 9 am–3 pm every Tuesday. Please contact Norma Revels 715-293-2561 or Bonnie Jones-Witthuhn 715-307-1182 if you are interested in knowing more.

Feeding the Hungry—At the Christmas Eve worship services each person was given a small tube of yummy M&M candies to enjoy. After the treat, if you return the tube with quarters (or checks, or dollar bills, or...), they can be given to Feed My Starving Children to help those Christ calls us to serve. As a congregation we have done this over the past 5 years & raised nearly \$20,000 which translates into nearly 100,000 meals which feeds 274 kids for a year. Containers can be dropped off in the offering plates or church office. If you missed Christmas Eve worship & would like some M&M containers, we have a few remaining. Bless you as we seek to follow Jesus' invitation to serve him by serving those who lack adequate food. ...*Lord when was it that we saw you hungry and fed you? Matthew 25:44*

Names of Veterans—The Mission Education Committee is inviting names of veterans in the congregation & would appreciate your helping make sure we have everyone's in preparation for an informal gathering in the coming weeks. We believe we have most of you already, but want to make sure! Please sign up at the Gathering Area table or email/visit with Rose Rude (rose.rude@uwrf.edu) or Dave Ostendorf (dave@firstchurchrf.org). Many thanks!

CARE PASSIONATELY

Prayer List—If you have people you wish to add to the church prayer list, please use the blue "I Wish" pew cards & put in the church office or the offering plate. If you wish to receive the weekly prayer list via email, contact the office.

Care Givers Program—An opportunity to serve members through an outreach program that pairs members providing visitors to those unable to be with us regularly in worship or activities. If you are interested in volunteering, have questions or are aware of anyone that would benefit from this, contact Jan Hansen at 715-425-5211

Meal Ministry—Ever had a death in the family? How about something joyous & life changing like the birth of a baby? As a congregation we are called to 'care passionately' for one another & one of the ways we would like to do that is through a "Meal Ministry." A small stipend to help pay for food may be available. If you are interested, please contact the church office.

Thinking of You Cards—Please use them to send a note to someone who is ill, grieving or you just haven't seen in a while. Place them in the offering plate & we will deliver them. This is one of the ways we care for one another.

Thank You Note—Dear First Congregational Church, Thank you for sponsoring families with the Giving Tree Program this year. Our community helped 150 families, totaling 344 children, celebrate Christmas! God bless and cheers to 2018! ~Tammy Pitzen & Terry Mithun

Sustainable Living: Tip Of The Month—Happy New Year! Looking for an easy New Year's resolution? This year, consider losing some kilowatt hours by replacing the most commonly-used light bulbs in your home with more energy efficient LED light bulbs. LED bulbs use a fraction of the energy of standard incandescent light bulbs, and come in all kinds of shapes, colors, and sizes. They light up quicker and often have a better light quality than compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs). And most LED bulbs last 10 years or longer, and are now priced very competitively. Reducing energy use is a great goal to set for 2018, and energy efficient LED lighting is an easy place to start. ~Brought to you by the Mission Education Committee'