

YOUTH EVENTS

Youth Events

Sun, Feb 11—Hunt Arena Ice Skating from **1:00-2:30 pm**, cost is \$10. Meet after church for lunch and then we will head to the Hunt Ice Arena for some open skate!

Sun, Feb 25—Indoor Mini Golf Youth Event from **Noon-2:30 pm**. Sign up for lunch and join our youth as we team up to play mini-golf inside the church! \$5 person/\$20 family max. A fun time to be had by all! Questions: JaNae 715-897-5358 or jmwestrich@gmail.com

Pre-Confirmation Retreat Metropolis Water Park in Eau Claire—Sixth Graders will depart **Friday, March 9th at 6:00 pm** and head to Eau Claire and will return home on Saturday March 10th at 3:00. Please let Diana or JaNae know if you are planning on attending. Questions: 715-897-5358



FINANCIAL

Treasurer's Report

Jan 1-Feb 4, 2018

General Fund Income* \$ 82,672.72

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

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

~The 2018 budget was passed at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 4.

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.

During 2017, the committee began implementing our third capital campaign & monitored industry interest rate increases to maintain the lowest possible costs. The committee carries over the policy of keeping 18 months' worth of payments in reserve.

Mortgage Summary – As of December 31, 2017

• Original cost of Facilities Expansion Project	\$2,386,970
• Remaining amount on Bank Loan	\$722,799.90
• Cash on hand in the Building Fund	\$99,912.29
• Interest Rate	4.5%
• Monthly Payment	\$8,425
• Interest paid each month	\$2,694.56
• Interest paid this year	\$39,580.57
• Interest paid over past 3 years (approx.)	\$124,153.57

We received \$314,704 in pledges for the period of 2017 to Easter 2020. Although we did not raise enough to pay off the mortgage by 2020, we did receive commitments to continue making our mortgage payments. The committee has been monitoring the interest rates & were made aware of rate increases. We have chosen to re-mortgage the building loan January 2018 locking in our current rate of 4.5% for the next 5 years. Based on the anticipated rate increase, we will save \$4,124 in interest over the next 5 years & possibly more as we expect rates to continue to rise. This will give us interest rate protection for the next 5 years when the loan balance will be about \$350,000. We thank the congregation for their generous support!

FEBRUARY 11, 2018

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 25-10:30;

March 4, 11, 18, 25

Welcomers for: Feb 18, 25; March 4, 11, 18, 25

Coffee Fellowship for: Feb 18, 25; March 4, 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.**

Ash Wednesday, Feb 14—Chicken marsala, rice, asparagus, chocolate dipped strawberries, salad
Feb 21—Beef stroganoff, noodles, salad, bread
Feb 28—Relay for Life Soup Night

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

AED/CPR Class—There will be an AED/CPR class offered on **Saturday, February 17th from 10:00 am to Noon**. Please contact Carole Mottaz at 715-425-7903.

Also, there will be an AED check off session for those who completed the AED/CPR class last year on **Wednesdays, February 14th and 21st between 4:00–7:00 pm** in the classroom downstairs.

Ash Wednesday: The New Date Night!—This year Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day, February 14. Why not make it date night? The Wednesday meal that night will be a Valentine's special meal (start your Lenten discipline after the meal & before worship!) Worship will be at 6:30 pm & includes communion & the imposition of ashes. The schedule for the day will be:

Wednesday School	3:45 to 5:15 pm
Wed Night Meal (Date night!)	5:15 to 6:15 pm
Bell Practice	5:45 to 6:30 pm
Ash Wednesday Worship	6:30 to 7:30 pm
Confirmation (all classes with parents)	6:30 to 7:30 pm
Choir Practice	7:30 to 8:15 pm

It Takes a Village Choir Concert—**Sun, Feb 18, 4:00 pm at Ezekiel Lutheran Church**—Please join us for the annual fundraising concert for the Haitian Relief Fund.

Over the years, the community of River Falls has been able to raise thousands of dollars to support this worthy cause. First Congregational's Choir, Ezekiel Lutheran's Choir, the UWRF Community Choir, Pierce County Ecumenical Choir, and the Croix Chordsmen Barbershop Chorus will all perform on the concert, and all of the singers will join together to create a mass choir at the end of the concert. Admission is free, and a free will offering will be collected for the Haitian Relief Fund.

Luther College Concert Band—We have several of our church college kids who attend Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. **Their Concert Band will be performing at New Richmond High School on Tuesday, March 27th at 7:00 pm.** Contact Emily Stifter at stifem01@luther.edu with any questions.

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!

VETERANS GATHERING

A **Veterans Gathering** with lunch will be held **Sunday, February 25** following second service (11:30 am) in the Fellowship Hall. Convened by the Mission Education Committee, all veterans and active duty members are warmly invited to attend. A County Service Officer has been invited to join us to answer questions about veterans' service benefits, and the Gathering will be a great opportunity for all veterans in the congregation to meet one another.

BUILDING FUND UPDATE

WELCOME OPENLY

Spirit & Health—The group will focus on our spiritual growth together around body issues (weight, exercise, health, image). We will meet on **Wednesdays at 6:00 pm**. Join us when you can. Questions, contact Rebecca Ferguson (262)227-1542; rebeccaferguson@hotmail.com

Book Group—Our next meeting will be **Tues, Feb 27 at 3:00 pm** to discuss *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers*. Bestselling author Anne Lamott writes about the three key prayers essential to coming through tough times, difficult days & the hardships of daily life. We will meet at the church. Books are available in the office.

Men's Group Forming—A group of men are forming one, possibly two new men's groups. One group would be primarily for retired men & meet at 8 am here at church for an hour. Another group would be for working men & meet either earlier in the morning or after dinner for about an hour. Interested? Please use the sign-up sheets to register your interest. One of the leaders will contact you when an initial meeting is scheduled. Questions to Brad Williams, Mike Gardner or Pastor Chris.

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 next gathering will be **February 13**.

Picture the Bible, First Congregational's art depicted Bible stories, is featured on the UCC news site. Here is the link to read the story: http://www.ucc.org/news_wisconsin_church_increases_interest_sacred_stories_picture_the_bible_01252018

Holy Land Tour in 2019—Pastor Chris is planning on leading a pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine in 2019. Emphasis will be two fold. One is the traditional Holy Land tour to visit and learn more about the Bible (Jerusalem, Bethlehem, River Jordan, etc). Second is to better understand how the Christian, Jewish and Muslim stories all intersect in this region and how this history unfolds today. Use the sign-up sheets to register interest. A brief outline of the trip will be at the end of the Travel as a Spiritual Act Adult Forum led by Pastor Chris on Sunday, Feb 25 during the 9 am Adult Forum time.

GROW SPIRITUALLY

Adult Forum—*The forum meets Sundays 9:00–10:00 am*
Feb 11: Bible Study: The Transfiguration, Stacy Myers
The last Sunday after Epiphany focuses on Jesus' transfiguration—a pivotal experience for Jesus' closest disciples who saw and likely understood Jesus differently on the top of the mountain after the transfiguration event. Come to learn and talk about this story.

Feb 18: Considering God's Armor, Evelyn Purdy—Ephesians 6:11-17 charges its readers to "take up the whole armor of God" to support one in right living. In order to understand the metaphor Paul employs, it is important to understand the nature of Roman military armor. Come for an interesting discussion.

Travel as a Spiritual Act—Travel changes us. It can also shape our faith. On **Sun, February 25** during the 9 am Adult Forum, Pastor Chris will talk about the importance of travel in this Christian story and his own faith journey. He will also talk briefly about a possible Pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine in 2019.

Tuesday Bible Study: All Are Welcome! - The Adult Bible Study group meets on **Tuesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm**. The Bible study group is using a new book, *A Survey of the Old Testament* by Andrew Hill and John Walton. This book has one chapter dedicated to each book in the Old Testament. Books are available in the church office for \$9.00. Newcomers are always welcome. 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 adult & 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.

Simpson Shelter Supplies Needed—New winter gloves; new winter thermals for men and women—all sizes; new men's boxers—all sizes; new women's bras—all sizes; new women's underwear—all sizes; disposable shaving razors; new men's t-shirts—size XL and XXL; breakfast cereal, coffee, tea, hot cocoa; bath towels—gently used or new. There is a box for donations.

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.

Relay for Life Fundraiser—Feb 28, 5:15-6:15 pm
The River Falls Relay for Life Event is scheduled for April 6 at the River Falls High School from 6 pm-1 am. Our church's team is having its annual **soup meal on Feb 28** to begin our team's fundraising. The meal begins at 5:15 & ends at 6:15 pm in the fellowship hall. Since the soups are donated by our team members, all proceeds go to the American Cancer Society.

Luminarias will be available at the meal for \$10/bag. Luminarias are another fundraising opportunity for our team. Luminarias are bags purchased "in memory of" or "in honor of" someone special that has been touched by cancer. The luminarias will be on display at the event around the walking track & are lit during the special recognition service at 9:30 pm.

This year's theme is "A Journey through Time with Hope." This event will focus on walkers on the track & team's having campsites, going back to some of the original focuses of the event. The spaghetti meal begins at 5 pm & the opening ceremony begins with the survivor walk. Come join the fun & help our team with fundraising & walking on the track throughout the night. Any questions, contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945.

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.

2018 Community Dementia Friendly 5-Part Series
River Falls Public Library from 6:30–8:00 pm
February 27—Dementia Champions

Understanding Dementia to support individuals and their families.

March 27—Care Giving—Nancy Abrahamson
Information, support, and resources for caregivers.

April 24—Virtual Dementia Tour by Second Wind Dreams
A virtual experience of what it feels like to have Dementia. Provided by Azura Memory Care of Eau Claire

At First Congregational Church from 3:00-7:00 pm
To register, call Pierce County ADRC at (715)273-6780

May 22—Round Table Discussion
Networking and collaboration opportunities for caregivers and the community.

June 26—Dementia Capable Community
A conversation about the process for our community to become Dementia friendly.