

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN**

*Graduation Sunday*

*"Second Sunday after Pentecost"*

June 6, 2021

9:30 am

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**GATHERING MUSIC**

**WELCOME**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

**L:** If you are tired, come and worship!

**P:** **If you are hungry, come and worship!**

**L:** If you are filled with joy, come and worship!

**P:** **If your spirit feels renewed, come and worship!**

**L:** Our God desires our worship, whether we have much or little to give.

**P:** **There is healing when we come together before our God.**

**All:** **All who are gathered here, come let us worship the God who leads us into life!**

**SONG**

***"All Things Bright and Beautiful"***

*Refrain: All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,  
all things wise and wonderful: Lord God made them all.*

*Each little flower that opens, each little bird that sings,  
God made their glowing colors, and made their tiny wings. Refrain*

*God gave us eyes to see them, and lips that we might tell  
how great is God Almighty, who has made all things well. Refrain*

**OPENING PRAYER (unison)**

Gathering God, **you have promised that if we draw near to you, you will draw near to us. In our worship time, prepare our hearts and minds that we might receive your wisdom and understanding. Relieve our bodies and souls from all the stress and anxiety of this world, that we might be filled with your peace. Pour out your Spirit upon us, that our worship might be joyful and authentic, bearing good fruit in our lives with our neighbors. In the name of Jesus Christ, risen Savior, we pray. Amen.**

**BLESSING OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES**

**PSALM 138 (The Message)**

**L:** Thank you! Everything in me says "Thank you!"

**P:** **Angels listen as I sing my thanks. I kneel in worship facing your holy temple and say it again: "Thank you!"**

**L:** Thank you for your love, thank you for your faithfulness; Most holy is your name, most holy is your Word.

**P:** **The moment I called out, you stepped in; you made my life large with strength.**

- L: When they hear what you have to say, GOD, all earth's kings will say "Thank you."  
P: **They'll sing of what you've done: "How great the glory of God!"**  
L: And here's why: GOD, high above, sees far below; no matter the distance, GOD knows everything about us.  
P: **When I walk into the thick of trouble, keep me alive in the angry turmoil.**  
L: With one hand strike my foes; With your other hand save me.  
P: **Finish what you started in me, God. Your love is eternal—don't quit on me now.**

## SCRIPTURE LESSON

John 3:1-17

## HOMILY

Rev. Chris Myers

## SONG

*"O God Beyond All Praising"*

Brass Group

## \*STATEMENT OF FAITH (World Council of Churches)

I believe in the living God, the Maker of all humankind who creates and sustains the universe in power and in love.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God incarnate on earth, who showed us by his words and work, suffering with others, conquest of death, what human life ought to be and what God is like.

I believe that the Spirit of God is present with us now and always, and can be experienced in prayer, in forgiveness, in the Word, the Sacraments, the community of the Church and all that we do. Amen.

## PRESENTATION OF SCHOLARSHIPS

Jenny Luedtke, Scholarship Committee

## THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

Lord in your mercy ...Hear our prayer.

...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

## THE COMMUNION

All Christians, regardless of denomination, tradition or age are welcome at the table of our Lord.

### *The Invitation to the Supper*

- L: Beloved in Christ, the Gospel tells us that on the first day of the week, Jesus Christ was raised from death, appeared to Mary Magdalene, on the same day sat at table with two disciples, and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.  
P: **This is the joyful feast of the people of God. Men and women, young and old, come from the east and the west, the north and south, and gather about Christ's table.**  
L: This table is for all people who wish to know the presence of Christ and to share in the community of God's people.

### ***The Great Thanksgiving***

L: The Lord be with you.  
P: **And also with you.**  
L: Lift up your hearts.  
P: **We lift them up to the Lord.**  
L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
P: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**  
L: We offer you praise, ...

### ***The Words of Institution***

L: We rejoice in this holy meal as we remember the mystery of faith:  
All: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

### ***Prayer of Consecration***

### ***Distribution of the Elements***

*Hymn during the distribution of the elements:*

***"Here I Am Lord"***

### ***Prayer of Thanksgiving***

All: **We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**\*BLESSING**

**POSTLUDE**

**Brass Group**

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### **Congratulations Graduates!**

We offer our congratulations to our 2021 High School graduates!

Those graduating this year include:

Ethan Cernohous, Nyssa George, Dennis Grisar, Zachary Johnson,  
Zachary Martin, Meridith Okal, Sophia Okal, Ellen Rayne, Kimberly Swanson,  
Erin Syverson, Olivia Vanasse

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: John 3:1-17**

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

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*Worship participants for this week:*

<i>Audio/Visual:</i>	<i>Jeff Hoffman, Andy Myers, Virgil Jensen</i>
<i>Music:</i>	<i>Jamie Mills, Marsha Pearson, David Reilly</i>
<i>Brass Group:</i>	<i>Jamie and Tim Mills, Andy Myers, Marsha Pearson, Emily Stifter</i>
<i>Preacher:</i>	<i>Rev. Chris Myers</i>

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**Treasurer's Report**

	<u>May 30, 2021</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 8,598	\$ 250,518
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,262	\$ 203,764

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

\*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

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## New Church Van Needed

Perhaps the most hopeful sign we are nearing the end of the pandemic is the need for a new church van. You may recall that when the pandemic began we sold our old church van (an aging 2004 Ford Econoline 15 passenger van that was rusting and had high mileage) rather than have it sit unused for a year. As we anticipate a more normal fall, we will need a church van to continue our current ministries. Below please find some details about the Church Van Campaign.

*Q: Do we really need a church van?*

A: Yes! In fact Stacy says on Wednesday afternoons when we pick up kids for Wednesday School, we could use two church vans! The church van is used to pick up Wednesday Schoolers, take our youth on trips to Feed My Starving Children, retreats, and monthly trips. The van is driven back and forth to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi for our annual mission trips saving us many dollars in baggage fees. We also hope to resume senior lunch trips in the fall.

*Q: What kind of van are we looking for?*

A: Church Council has authorized a small team to research options for a used 15 passenger van that is safe, has about 50,000 miles on it and will be easy for both youth and seniors to enter and exit. Right now we are looking at both Sprinters and Transits in the used car markets.

*Q: Can we get an electric or hybrid church van?*

A: After carefully looking into this option, the short answer is no. While there are some exciting new possibilities for hybrid vans, they would have to be bought new which would double our price. An all electric van would not allow us to use it on trips to Back Bay.

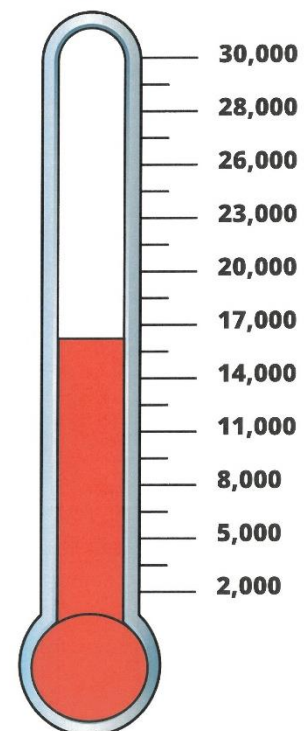
*Q: How much will it cost?*

A: We estimate it will cost between \$30—32,000 dollars used. The used car market is really hot now, driving up costs so we are starting a Church Van Campaign to raise \$32,000 to purchase a slightly used church van.

*Q: When will we get it?*

A: When we raise the money! We hope we can quickly raise the money in the next 8 weeks so we can purchase it, have it lettered with our church name and be ready for us by September. Please write 'Church Van Campaign' in the memo. You can also make donations on the church website under the 'give' option. No gift is too big or too small!

**Church Van Fund  
\$32,000 Goal!**



Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

**Those who are ill or recovering:**

Megan (daughter of Steve and Janice Healy), Augie (friend of Rose Rude), Peg Thompson, Roger Hirstein, Jim, TC (brother in law of Cori Fosmo) and his family, Mischa (friend of Bobbie Kuhn), Jodi (sister of Lori Johnson), Jackie Nesvig (sister of Marshall Skule), Dan (son of Betsy and Tom Westerhaus), Raelle, Jeff and Kim Jorae, Sam (grandson of Jan and Glenn Hansen), Barbara Stephens

**Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:**

- For those graduating from High School this year including...Ethan Cernohous, Nyssa George, Dennis Grisar, Zachary Johnson, Zachary Martin, Meridith Okal, Sophia Okal, Ellen Rayne, Kimberly Swanson, Erin Syverson, Olivia Vanasse
- For those who will rest in and enjoy our new Memorial Garden, may it kindle peace, faith and joy
- For the Youth Ministry Search team as they seek to find a new Youth Minister by the fall, that they may think creatively about future ministry possibilities with our young people
- For the Church Van Campaign, that we may quickly raise enough funds to purchase a used 15 passenger van
- For Carol Merriman who will be helping at Moon Beach Camp this summer
- For those who were vaccinated here at church on Wednesday, June 2 from 5-7pm, that it may speed our return to normal
- For our incredibly faithful and flexible musicians, webteam and deacons who are willing to put in the extra work each week for worship
- For those who continue to support our church's ministry with their tithes, offerings and gifts--you are all a blessing

**Prayers for our World:**

- For peace and resolution to the intractable problems of our world, come Holy Spirit
- For an end to gun violence and the lives it destroys
- For the rest of the world as it navigates an increasingly aggressive pandemic
- For those trying to be vaccinated and those who already have, that we may continue to act safely
- For police officers who are struggling with so many expectations
- That justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24)
- For students gearing up for exams, the last days of school and grad parties—may you finish strong!
- For our fractured nation that we may find ways to come together and solve our real problems

**Prayers of Thanksgiving:**

- For the Memorial Garden Committee (Lu Lueck, Marshall Skule, Susan Walden, JoAnne Friedell and Pastor Chris) who took the idea of a beautiful place for the saints of our church to rest and made it a reality—God bless you
- For Catherine Engstrom and Steve Papp who are the proud parents of Margaret Jean Papp born April 29 at 7 pounds 5 ounces and 20.5 inches long in Hudson with happy siblings Brandon, Wes and Trudy—may she grow in love and trust
- For Sawyer Sitz, son of Heather and Dan Sitz to be baptized on June 20 and Weston Fuller, son Kahla and Farnum Fuller to be baptized on June 27—that they may grow in grace and years
- For Tim Bylander who is single handedly renovating the lower level bathroom—it looks mighty fine
- For the over 167 million people vaccinated so far in this country, thanks be to God

**For those grieving the loss of loved ones:**

- For Paul (friend of Janice Healy) who died recently
- For the family of Jenny Sperling who died recently at Comforts of Home and whose funeral was recently led by Pastor Roger Kampstra, and whose interment in Webster will be in early June, that she may rest in peace
- For those in mourning, including the Larson, Wymer, and Reilly families as well as all those who have died from Covid-19

If you have people you wish to include on our prayer list, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.