



FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL

110 North Third Street
River Falls, WI 54022
715-425-2052
www.firstchurchrf.org

God is still speaking,

July 1, 2021

*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
- Welcome openly
- Grow spiritually
- Care passionately
- Serve generously



Pastor's Page

It feels really good to be coming out of the pandemic, though we know that it has by no means been vanquished, especially at the global level. Summer lies before us and the ongoing openness of our communities and country bring a renewed sense of joy and gratitude. In many ways, however, the challenges of the coming period are as daunting as those of the recent past.

As the “boundaries” of the pandemic fade, the open ground ahead of us is uncertain and shaky. What may have once been “normal” may no longer be, and a “new normal” is yet to take shape, if at all. The turbulence of economies, employment, politics, race relations, and civil society continue to unnerve. It will likely be months or even years before the proverbial dust settles.

The role and the work of the church—the community of faith—in helping shape the days ahead is as critical as was our rising to meet the dramatic challenges and needs of the past year. We adapted. We worshipped every Sunday. We gave generously to help those in great need. We reached out and supported one another. We provided ongoing learning opportunities. We engaged as we were able in works of justice. We listened and learned and responded as conditions shifted.

Now we are compelled to look ahead, to look anew. In churches everywhere there lingers the question: will people come back? Will they participate in shared worship and in the pressing work of ministry, outreach, education, and community engagement? Will churches nurture and strengthen deep and abiding relationships so essential to community life and well-being? Or will they fall back on “old ways”

as unfolding cultural shifts make it easier to “observe” church instead of participating with it, or see it as a place to escape the world instead of changing it?

The most fundamental question, however, remains: how are we to be the church in the world?

The story of Abraham, who “set out, not knowing where he was going” is amazingly pertinent and powerful to our own day and time, as are all the stories of all the peoples of God who journeyed unknowing and uncertain into the future, driven by faith.

There will be changes ahead. There will be new ways of being the church. There will be ongoing challenges. There will be untold opportunities to create a new way of life and living that reflect the call of God through Jesus Christ even in our own time.

As the year(s) ahead unfold, our commitment *together* to shape and grow an ever-stronger beloved community in a new and unknown and uncertain era is foundational to who we are and to who we will be as a people of God.

This may be a singular opportunity of our lifetimes to do so. Let us move ahead with joy and thanksgiving and faith, driven by a vision of hope and wholeness, of community and joy, of justice and openness.

Pastor Dave



Summer worship will be in the Fellowship Hall on summer Sundays at 9:30 am. With our new bipolar ionization HVAC system (the same one is used at Mayo Clinic), it cleans and refreshes the entire room every 15 minutes. Coffee Fellowship

will follow each service in the back of the Fellowship Hall. Registration is no longer required, masks are optional and chairs are spaced out. Sometime over the summer we hope to make the move back to the sanctuary for worship. At this point, we are still letting the song leaders lead us in song as we enjoy their music. Please continue to pray for our church leaders as they try to keep us both safe and faithful.



Projects Following Worship for Kids

Calling kids and families! Come for a special, short craft project following worship on **July 11 and August 22**.



VBS, 2021: *Create!*

August 3–5, 9:00–11:00 am

Children age 3 through completed Grade 5 are invited to participate in the 2021 VBS program, *Create!* The sessions will focus on *The Parable of Talents* and what it means to be made in the image of a creative (and still creating) God. Students will use their own creativity and work on a variety of art projects. Registration is slow, please extend an invitation to friends and neighbors. All are welcome!

Please register on the website: <https://firstchurchrf.org/pages/vacation-bible-school>

Please Help! VBS Volunteers Needed

A successful Vacation Bible School program requires volunteers. Please volunteer! We need teachers and craft volunteers for August 3–5, 9:00–11:00 am. Please help! To volunteer, please use the sign-up link.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-vbsvolunteers>

Youth Ministry Search Team

After the departure of JaNae Westrich this past April, a small Youth Ministry Search Team has been appointed by Church Council comprised of Pastor Chris, Diane Crist (Personnel), Kathy Rausch (Moderator Elect), Scott Elsesser (parent of teens), Melissa Wilson (parent of teen) and church interns Jenna Lawrence, Evan Luedtke and Jada Trautmiller. They are currently revising our job description and thinking creatively about future tasks and ministry ideas. We hope to have a new Youth Minister in place by the fall. Please continue to pray for guidance for them.

Coffee Fellowship Hosts and Liturgists Needed

Another sign of the return to normalcy at church is the return of both Coffee Fellowship and Liturgists.

Coffee Fellowship Hosts will be asked to serve Best Maid cookies which are in the church freezer, make lemonade and/or serve coffee. All the materials are provided, you will simply need to serve and clean up (at this point we are using disposable cups). Sign up at church or on the church website: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-coffee>

Liturgists will lead us in the Call to Worship and one of the Scripture Lessons. The material will be emailed out on Thursday to practice. Sign up at church or on the church website: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-liturgist>

Please note church interns can receive credit for either of these activities. Thank you for volunteering in these important ministries as we continue our journey.



PEACH FUNDRAISER

It's time to place your order for the delicious Washington State Peaches! Single layer box \$22.00 or two or more single layer boxes for \$20.00 each box. The peaches should be arriving early August. We will call when pick up begins.

There are 3 ways to order:

1. Email: office@firstchurchrf.org
2. Sign up link on website: www.firstchurchrf.org
3. Call: 715-425-2052 - order Mon-Thurs from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm or leave a message

Order deadline is July 25. When placing an order, please provide your name, phone number and the number of boxes you would like to order. Thank you for your support!

Memorial Garden

The Church Memorial Garden was dedicated on May 30 and has welcomed home our first church saint, Ruth Reilly, on June 19 after her Memorial Service. The Memorial Garden is intended to be a peaceful resting place for our church saints and a place of healing for family members. More details can be found on the church website under forms: <https://firstchurchrf.org/pages/sign-up-sheets> (or request form from the church office).

Many thanks to our Memorial Committee for getting this ready (Susan Walden, Lu Lueck, Marshall Skule, JoAnne Friedell and Pastor Chris).



Pastoral Acts in June 2021

June 19—Memorial Service for Ruth Reilly

June 20—Baptism of Sawyer Thomas Sitz

June 21—Celebration of Life for Phil Stewart

June 23—Prayer Service for Ruth Bowman

June 27—Confirmation of Jenna Lawrence

June 27—Baptism of Weston Fuller



Unto Us A Child Is Given!

Please welcome Sawyer Thomas Sitz, son of Dan and Heather, grandson of Maxine and Tom Sitz, who was baptized into the Christian faith in a water-filled service on Sunday, June 20.

Please pray for strength, wisdom, and courage as together we help him grow into the love and grace of Jesus.





Church Workers and Leaders Needed

One of the best ways to get to know other people is by joining a church committee or team. These groups meet monthly to do the work of the church. Especially this past year when we were often isolated from one another, these committees and teams were amazing in the ways they not only got the church's work done, they also maintained their connections and cared for one another.

Below is a list of our current church leadership needs. Groups generally meet the third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm for one hour. New members will begin in September at the All Church Meeting Night on Tues., September 21. Please look at the list of needed workers below and prayerfully consider how you may use your gifts in God's service. Contact the church office for more details.

- Christian Education—Provides faith formation programs for children, youth and adults—1 Team Member Needed
- Deacons—Work with the church worship life and membership—3 Team Members Needed
- Discipleship—Oversees church fundraising and generosity efforts—Full
- Endowment Grant—Distributes grants from our Endowment Fund—1 Team Member Needed
- Mission Education—Coordinates the various missions of the church both inside and outside the church walls—Full
- Music—Provides musical opportunities to enrich the life of the church—1 Team Member Needed
- Trustees—Works to oversees the church building and finances—4 Team Members Needed
- Welcoming—Provides welcoming and opportunities for people to get to know one another—Full

Softball News

Church softball is back and what a great feeling it was to be back on the field with friends and family. This week's game was exciting and filled with emotion, from 'we are way behind' to 'we can do this and win the game.' Sadly, we lost, but there was potential there and we all had fun cheering each other on. One of our fans told me after the game, "you guys sure are entertaining and glad we are back playing." Way to go team!

Come join in the kinship and cheer us on in the future.

Our next three games are:

- June 28—7:45 pm at Hoffman Park
- Skip the week of July 5th
- July 12—7:45 pm at Hoffman Park
- July 19—6:30 pm at Hoffman Park

Come join in the fun and laughs. If you have any questions please contact Matthew Thurston at (715)781-3626 or Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945.



Back row: Louie Filkins, Ryan Ludden, Matthew Thurston, William Tuchtenhagen, Bryan Jaeckel, Beth Mitchell, Andy Myers, Alex Plum

Middle row: Reagan Selleck, Matt Myers

Front row: Sarah Plum, Sam Thurston, Deb Hoffman, Peter Rayne

Missing: Jeff Hoffman, Bridget, Tim, Brody, Farnum Fuller, Larry Ludden, Jeremy Kehl, Jen Selleck

People in the Pews: Karen Lloyd

1. *Where did you grow up/hometown?* I grew up in Grand Meadow which is a very small town (approximately 1,000 people) in southeastern Minnesota. It is located in one of four counties in the state without any lakes! My high school graduating class had 28 students - many of whom I am still friends with today.
2. *Where do you live now?* We moved to River Falls in 2005 and my family lives about 5 miles outside of town.
3. *How long have you been attending First Congregational Church?* We started attending First Congregational in 2013 just as my daughter was starting confirmation classes.
4. *What keeps you coming back to church at UCC?* I could write pages for this question; however, the number one answer is the PEOPLE!!! I think it speaks volumes that once my daughter went off to college her only request for her first trip home was to attend church so she could see everyone!
5. *What is your favorite childhood memory?* Growing up my family lived right next door to my grandma. I have so many fond memories of spending my summer days with her in her gardens. She had 3 large gardens that she tended to until she reached 100 years old!!! She always made gardening look so easy.
6. *What is your favorite hobby or pastime?* Most people would say my favorite hobby is working; however, where I feel most relaxed is when I am hiking. The most beautiful hike I've done was the NaPali Coast on Kauai. The scariest hike I've done was Angels Landing in Zion National Park. My most enjoyable hikes are any with my daughter! My bucket list hike is to hike the Appalachian Trail with my husband once we both retire!



High School Youth Gathering

Join us on **Monday, July 12 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm** for a pool party! We will have food and snacks available. Bring your suit and towel. You can enjoy the water or just hang out and connect with friends. Pastor Chris will be there and looks forward to seeing you all! **All 9th through 12th graders are welcome!**

Please sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-high1>

Thank You Notes

Aloha First Congregational Church, Thank you for selecting me to receive your scholarship this year. Your generosity is greatly appreciated! Thank you for being such a great church to grow up in. With much love, Dennis Grisar

Thank you so much for your truly generous gift! With this scholarship I will be able to pay for nearly half of my tuition! This really eases a lot of my anxiety in being able to pay my tuition in my first year. Again, thank you so much. I cannot

express truly how much this means to me. Thank you, Meridith Okal

First Congregational Church, Thank you for the scholarship. It will help me continue my education at Michigan Tech. I am glad to be a part of this community, even as I am off at college. Thank you, Mya Davis
Thank you for the scholarship. I appreciate this generous offer and will use it wisely! Thanks again, Zach Martin

Thank you for your continued support. The congregation's generosity allows me to continue

pursuing my dreams and making memories at college. Once again, thank you all so much! Colin Richter

Dear Scholarship Committee, Thank you so much for awarding me with this scholarship to continue my education at Gustavus College. It means a lot to me that the church and others believe in me and want me to thrive in college. Although I am still uncertain which career path I will chose, I am grateful for the opportunity given to me, and I will do my best to show my success! Thank you, Katy Myers



New Church Van Needed

We are getting so close to getting our new church van! Please help us make the final push to purchase a 15 passenger van that can be used to transport both youth and adults, pick up Wednesday Schoolers and enable Mission Trips. We hope to end our campaign in July so we have it ready for the fall. Checks can be made out to the

First Congregational Church (marked 'church van' in the memo line) or you can give online via the church website. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

Engaging the Word, Engaging the World...

Upcoming

Thursday, July 15 - Sunday, July 18—River Falls Days—This year's celebration will be a little different, and will include a reverse, walk-through parade Friday, July 16. Parade units will be lined up along Second Street while spectators walk by each float. Hope for Creation will have a spot, so be sure to stop by.



Mission Partner: Feed My Starving Children

On March 16 last year, Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) shut down its operations in the face of the pandemic. Nine days later the organization started up again, with machines at one of its main suppliers bulk-packing its food for global distribution. By August, approved safety measures allowed FMSC to re-open volunteer food packing sessions, and its rooms were alive once again with the joy of volunteers doing good together. *By February 2021, FMSC hit a record 45 million meals shipped in a single month.*

Our church has a long relationship with FMSC, sending dozens upon dozens of youth and adult volunteers to package food at its nearby Minnesota facilities and providing Mission budget funds to support its global operations: \$1,400 in 2021.

Founded in 1987 the Christian nonprofit partners with organizations around the world to reach children in great need in schools, orphanages, medical clinics and feeding programs in 70 countries, to break the cycle of poverty. Its U.S. food packing operations now draw thousands of volunteers to sites in eight states.

FMSC produces three special MannaPack meal formulas developed by food science and nutrition professionals to supplement nutritional needs and reduce problems with malnutrition. This past February the organization quietly hit a major milestone of 3 billion meals distributed throughout the world.

In the coming months we will again "hit the road" in our new church van and/or other vehicles (we've been known to take a school bus!) to volunteer at the Minnesota food packing facility. Watch the newsletter for information, or check with our youth and other mission leaders to learn when and where...



Fellowship Hall Upgrades

Tim 'The Tool Man' Bylander, our church Building Supervisor, has been at it again.

He repaired the backsplash on the serving counter in the Fellowship Hall recently. It is now ready for coffee fellowship which resumed recently. Thank you!

Conversations About the Fall for Parents

Many thanks to the parents who attended the conversations about the fall Sunday schedule. We had excellent representation from our families with school-age children, with only a very few families unable to attend. Thank you!

The next step will be for the pastoral staff to synthesize feedback, consider the opportunities and needs of the congregation, and make a plan. Stay tuned. There will be more to come.



Donations for Shut In Bags Needed

One of the good things to come out the pandemic are the 25 shut in bags that are delivered each month by volunteers. We are looking for donations of small gifts or handmade items that can be put in these gift bags. Home baked cookies, small handmade items, even seasonal dollar store items are all great additions to this ministry, but there must be 25 of them. Contact the church office for more info.

Save Your Batteries to Recycle

We have a container available for recycling all those old, depleted batteries. Start saving them now and bring them to church. We'll pass them on to the recyclers and keep them out of landfills and the environment in our ongoing commitment to sustainability.

Church Yoga

Jan Hansen's church yoga group meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the church Fellowship Hall from 9:00-10:00 am and via Zoom. Please contact the church office to receive the Zoom link.

amazon smile Free Money for Church Ministries

The church has created an Amazon Smile account through which the church can receive a portion of the price of each purchase you make through Amazon. It is important to know that you need to do two things for the church to receive this money. First, go to Amazon Smile by typing in smile.amazon.com and then add First Congregational Church River Falls to your Amazon Smile. Second, every time you order you must order through your Smile account by going to smile.amazon.com. Once you do this, the church will receive 0.5% of each eligible order. Please contact the church office if you have questions.

Simpson Shelter Supply Needs

- Twin, full, and queen size blankets and sheet sets—new
- Pillows—new
- White t-shirts—new, sizes small and medium
- Large tubs of Country Time Lemonade and Kool Aid mixes (we use these in Igloo containers for meals)
- Hot sauce
- Coffee—ground, caffeinated
- Products for textured and natural hair
- New shower curtains and shower rings

There is a box at the church for donations. Thank you!

Treasurer's Report

	Week of June 20, 2021	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,440	\$ 273,284
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,262	\$ 231,550

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

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

Church Staff

You can contact them via their email and cell numbers which are below.

Chris Myers—chris@firstchurchrf.org - 715-441-2497
 Missy Luedtke—missy@firstchurchrf.org - 715-222-5427
 Stacy Myers—stacy@firstchurchrf.org - 715-338-6406
 Dave Ostendorf—dave@firstchurchrf.org - 715-441-6559
 Jamie Mills—degolierjamie@gmail.com - 715-419-0850
 Dave Mountain—focusfan2001@yahoo.com - 715-245-6854
 Tim Bylander—timthefixitguy@gmail.com - 715-808-2900



FIRST

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

God is still speaking,

Office Phone: 715-425-2052

E-mail: office@firstchurchrf.org

Website: www.firstchurchrf.org

STAFF

Chris Myers, Pastor

Dave Ostendorf, Minister for Community and Outreach

Stacy Johnson, CE Minister

Missy Luedtke, Office Coordinator

Joel Larsen, Moderator

Jamie Mills, Music Coordinator and Bell Choir Director

Marsha Pearson, Organist

Terry Mithun, Organist

Tim Bylander, Building Supervisor

Dave Mountain, Custodian

Pastor's home phone number:

Chris Myers 715-426-2075

chris@firstchurchrf.org

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

110 N. Third Street

River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

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U.S. POSTAGE PAID

PERMIT #53

RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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JULY 1, 2021



Ways to Reach Out to Others

All of us want to do something to help and be Jesus' loving disciples in the present moment. Below are some specific things you can do at home:

Shut-ins/Seniors

We have connected our seniors/shut-ins with church families who send them notes, small parcels and kid's artwork. If you want to be matched with a shut-in, contact the church office.

Compassion Fund

There are families in our church who have been furloughed, fired, and laid off. We will be able to offer some modest assistance to these families through our church Compassion Fund. Gifts should be mailed to the church and marked 'Compassion Fund.' Families who need assistance, please contact Pastor Chris.

Prayer

Prayer connects us with God and our neighbors. Pray for the helpers. Pray for your families. Pray for people losing their jobs. Pray for students learning online. Pray for families learning new routines. Pray for people cooped up inside. Each week there is a prayer list of people, situations and thanksgivings that is sent out by email to help people in their prayer life. You can sign up by contacting the church office.

Sign Up Sheets: All of the current sign-up sheets are on the church website. Click on the "Connect" button at the top of the page and then select "Sign Ups/Forms."