

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ www.firstchurchrf.org

November 15, 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

One of you told me about the antics of your dog recently. Your dog has developed an eccentric habit, a compulsion really. Whenever you give her a rawhide bone, she spends the rest of the day and sometimes the next day, in a flurry of activity. Whether she is motivated by instinct, her own quirkiness or some weird combination is hard to say. But given a bone, this dog begins her

quest for the perfect place to bury it. Once she finds this place, and remember this is an inside dog, she proceeds to dig a hole, in the linoleum. Undaunted by the fact that all her furious digging has scarcely made a scuff on the floor, she carefully buries her bone in her imaginary hole. She even noses imaginary dirt over it and then turns herself around to kick some more for good measure. This whole endeavor can take about twenty or even thirty minutes.

It is at this point, when she inspects her work, that she appears to realize something is terribly wrong. To her utter shock and amazement she comes to realize that her prize bone is not sufficiently buried, and in fact is sitting there in plain sight. So she picks it back up, and begins the hunt for a better spot to bury her bone. And this cycle repeats itself over and over and over until at last the dog is exhausted and decides it is time for nap.

As I was listening to this person describe the antics of this dog, I wondered if some of the craziness of that dog isn't also inside each of us as well. Aren't there things we do over and over and over again, that we do not understand, like trying to bury that bone, which prove completely and utterly unproductive? Aren't there things that we chase after that utterly

consume us, but that also never really satisfy us? Isn't there a cycle of busyness that consumes us, and yet doesn't seem to get us anywhere? And having spent all that time and effort trying to bury that bone to no avail, aren't we all like that dog, just ready for a good nap?

This pandemic has gone on too, too long. We are all tired of it, angry at it, and just want it to be over. While I am not a psychic, I wonder if one of the things that will come out of this pandemic is a better sense of setting our priorities. Psalm 90:12 reminds us: teach us to number our days so that we may gain a wise heart. Too often we spend all our energy on things that do not feed us and will not ultimately matter. Too often, like that dog, we spend our time going back and forth with little to show for it. And too often we so long for *the* good life that we forget to life *a* good life.

As we approach the season of Thanksgiving, let us stop spinning our wheels and start giving our thanks. Let us find concrete ways to take the faith and love of Jesus and live them out in concrete ways day by day. In so doing may we find the abundant life God wants for each of us.

In Gratitude and Thanksgiving,
Pastor Chris

WORSHIP faithfully

A Note on Sunday Worship

We have moved back to the sanctuary for Sunday worship as

of Sunday, November 14, our Giving Thanks Sunday.

We have moved to our new fall schedule with the resumption of fall programming and the reopening of the church nursery and Sunday School with worship at 10:00 am. See the Fall Sunday Schedule below. The livestream and radio options will continue.

For now, until we get through this current fourth wave of the COVID spike, we are asking all people to mask when they gather in groups, including Sunday Worship, confirmation and Sunday School events that are inside the church building.



Advent Evening Prayer

Once again this Advent we will gather for Evening Prayer in the Sanctuary on Wednesday nights using our beloved Holden Evening Prayer. Join us on Wednesday, December 1, 8 and 15 at 6:30 pm for this half hour worship service. Confirmation, church intern and youth groups will join us for worship then go to class or youth group.

Wednesday meals will be served in both 'in person' and 'to go' formats. There will be no Wednesday service on Wednesday, December 22. Our Wednesday Schedule in Advent will be:

3:45-5:15 pm	Wednesday School
5:15-6:00 pm	Family Meals
5:45-6:30 pm	Bell Practice
6:30-7:00 pm	Evening Prayer and beginning of Conf/Interns. Youth Group
7:00-7:30 pm	Second half of Confirmation/Interns/Youth Group
7:00-8:00 pm	Choir Practice



Fall Sunday Schedule

8:30 am—Coffee ready!

8:45-9:45 am—Adult Forum

9:00-9:45 am—Music Practice

10:00 am—Worship and Sunday School in Sanctuary

10:30 am—Kids Preschool thru 8th Grade leave for Sunday School

11:00-11:30 am—Coffee Fellowship in Fellowship Hall

11:15 am—Sunday School Ends

11:30 am—12:30 pm—Middle or High School Youth Group

Our current fall schedule is above. Starting Sunday, November 14, we will be worshipping in the Sanctuary again and continue to ask people to mask when indoors in groups following CDC guidelines. Please continue to pray for our church leadership as they seek to find ways for us to gather both safely and faithfully.

Inquirer's Class

Interested in learning more about our life and ministry at First Congregational? Wondering what membership of the church is all about? Come to the Inquirer's Class on **Tuesday, December 7, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm.**

At this gathering you will meet church staff and leaders, meet other newcomers, and learn more about our life and ministry opportunities. Dessert and coffee are served and childcare is available. Please sign up or contact the church office.

Adult Forum

The Adult Forum discusses the Sunday's texts prior to worship on Sunday mornings. Please come! All are welcome. The Adult Forum meets in the Youth Room, Sunday mornings, 8:45-9:45 am.



Wed, November 17—Middle School Youth Group
 Sun, November 21—High School Youth Group Service Project
 Sun, November 28—Middle School Movie Night, Youth Room, 6:00 pm
 Wed, December 1—High School Youth Group
 Sun, December 5—High School Youth Group—Cookies/Gingerbread House
 Wed, December 8—Middle School Youth Group
 Sun, December 12—Middle School Youth Group Service Project
 Wed, December 15—Church Interns
 Sun, December 19—Middle School Youth Group—Cookies/Gingerbread House
 Wed, December 22—Middle School Youth Group



The Advent Workshop

The annual Advent Workshop for families will be held following Sunday School on **December 5**.

The event will include a chance to make a variety of Christmas ornaments and simple snacks. This is a great family event. Please come and invite friends to join you! Please sign up.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-advent3>

Church Van



Still no word on when the church van may be delivered. It has been ordered but with supply chain issues, chip shortages and the plant closing for 3 weeks, it is delayed. We will update you when we hear word on its arrival and dedication. Thanks to all who helped pay for it! Thank you also to the team (Tim Bylander, Bob Ferguson, Brad Williams and Pastor Chris) who took this project on.

Adult Bible Study

The Adult Bible Study group meets Wednesday afternoons, 1:00–2:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall. On November 17 the group will begin discussing a new book, *I heard God Laugh* by Matthew Kelly. This is a short book. Anyone considering Bible Study might enjoy attending for conversation about the new book as a way to “try out” Bible Study. Books are available in the church office for \$10.00. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

2022 Pledges Due

If you have not yet returned your 2022 Pledge Sheets, please do so today. Your generosity provided in your pledges is what powers our church ministry. We ask three things of you:

- If you don't pledge, please begin this year
- If you do pledge, please consider increasing your pledge
- If you have not signed up for electronic giving, please do so—it is quick and easy

Thank you for the financial support of our church's mission and ministry. Together we are making great things happen inside and outside our church walls.

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.



Memorials Given

Memorials were given in honor of Paul D. Anderson, which the family has directed to the Compassion Fund.



Family Meals

Each Wednesday night we are again offering our home-cooked meals to be picked up between 5:15 and 6:00 pm. The cost is \$8 per person with a max per family of \$25. For now we are offering a limited number of seats in the Fellowship Hall geared to those already here for Wednesday programming. To go meals can be picked up in the alley in back of the church (enter on Maple & exit on Elm Streets). We are thankful to Katy Kapaun, our church cook, our kitchen helpers & church interns, all of whom make this ministry possible. Please sign up on the website by 4:00 pm Tuesday and indicate 'to go' or 'in person' in the comment section. Here is the upcoming menu:

Nov 17—Chicken marsala over rice, fruit, vegetable, and croissant

Nov 24—No Wednesday Programming/Meals—Thanksgiving

Meals will begin again in December.

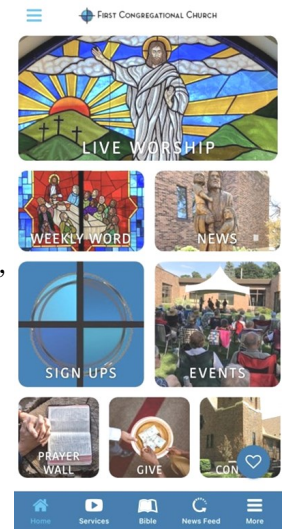


New Church App

The church has a new mobile phone app. You can download it from the church website or by scanning the QR Code to the left (directions below) which can also be found on a flyer on the sign-up table and Facebook. The App includes: Live and Past Services, Weekly Word, Newsletters, Sign Up Sheets, Events Calendar, Prayer Wall, Giving, Bible, News Feed, Push Notifications. Call the church office with any questions or if you need help.

Five easy steps to get our church app on your mobile device:

1. On your mobile device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code above or visit: <https://bit.ly/FCCApp>
3. Click on the link that pops up
4. Install the Church App - Tithe.ly onto your device
5. Open the Church App (skip login if prompted) and get connected with our church



Altar Flowers

Please sign up to provide flowers for the altar for Sunday worship. Sign up at church or on the church website:

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

Welcomers Needed

Please sign up to be a welcomer on Sunday morning before the worship service. One person is needed for at the bottom of the stairs at the 3rd Street Entrance. Please arrive 20 minutes prior to the worship service. Sign up at church or here:

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

Coffee Fellowship Hosts and Liturgists Needed

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.



Angels on Earth Giving Tree

If you would like to help some children have a better Christmas this year, please select an ornament from the tree and purchase a gift from their wish list. The unwrapped gift with the ornament needs to be at the church **no later than Thursday, December 9th**. Please give the Gift Cards to someone in the church office. If you would like to make a cash donation instead, please send the check (made out to First Congregational Church with "AOE" in the memo line) or cash to the church office. Thank you for your generosity. If you have questions, please contact Diane Welsh (651-334-3128 or 715-386-6620) or the church office.

Giving Thanks Meal Thanks

A huge thank you to Andy and Christina Krueger, Laura Miller and David Reilly who once again headed up this year's Giving Thanks meal. In our own little version of Jesus' miracle of the loaves and fishes, these four yet again manage to harness our gifts and energies and feed people. Pictures of the meal and workers will follow in the next newsletter. Please be sure to thank them for their work.

Inquirer's Class

Interested in learning more about our life and ministry at First Congregational? Wondering what membership of the church is all about? Come to the Inquirer's Class on **Tuesday, December 7, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm**. At this gathering you will meet church staff and leaders, meet other newcomers, and learn more about our life and ministry opportunities. Dessert and coffee are served and childcare is available. Please sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-inquirers>



Christmas Eve Worship

We are working on our Christmas Eve Worship schedule. It is likely we will offer two indoor in-person worship services that night, a 4:00 pm Family Service with Communion and an 11:00 pm Service with Choir and Communion. We will also livestream one or both of the services. Please look to future newsletters for updates and pray for our pastors, deacons, musicians and worship leaders as they try to keep us safe and faithful.

Christmas Shoebox Project 2021

For many years, the yoga group and members of First Congregational have supported a "Christmas Shoebox" for the men at the Kinnic Drug and Alcohol Rehab Center in River Falls. Even though these are somewhat strange times, the NEED is still there, and we are again collecting items and will fill the boxes and bags and deliver them to the Kinnic Rehab to show that we all still care!

These shoeboxes contain socks, playing cards, puzzles, soap, toothpaste and many other items. The thick warm gloves have been a welcome addition as well as the nice warm hats!! The new cribbage boards are also a great item the guys really enjoy. We will work with the Wednesday School group in decorating some Christmas bags as well as the older youth helping with wrapping the boxes.

A list of items is at the church, or you can request a list from the church office. Donations are most welcome. Please leave any items in the bin in the gathering area or in the office. Cash donations will be used to purchase any needed items. Thank you for anything that you can provide. If you have any questions, please contact Jean Smith at jsmithler@yahoo.com or at 715-781-6880 or the church office.



Engaging the Word, Engaging the World...

Upcoming

Monday, November 15, 6:00 pm, Sustainability, Water, Energy, & Industry. Join the founder of Kairos Indoor Agriculture and representatives of the innovative wastewater treatment system in Roberts as they discuss innovative, sustainable, and successful solutions to environmental challenges. Attend at the River Falls Public Library or via its Facebook or YouTube channel. Sponsored by the Library, Hope for Creation, the University, and Powerful Choices.

Friday, November 19, 8:00-9:00am, Make It Okay is a campaign to reduce the stigma of mental illnesses. If you are interested in learning more, consider attending one of these FREE 60-minute virtual events: Make It Okay to Talk About Mental Illness, or December 8, 2021 12-1pm. Go to MakeItOK.org to register, Click on "Take Action" and scroll down to "Upcoming Events." The Make It OK campaign is made possible by HealthPartners, Inc.

Updating

Bring your batteries to church... Did you change the batteries in your smoke detectors last week as Standard Time returned? (A good way to remember batterie checks is each spring and summer when the time changes.) Getting new batteries for electronics or gifts? **Bring your used batteries to church!!** Mike Noreen has provided a recycling container for all those household batteries, in the back corner near the coat rack of the Gathering Area. We've already filled several containers; let's fill more and keep them out of landfills!

Unfolding

On the good news front.. Renewable energy from solar and wind sources nearly quadrupled over the last decade and continues to expand. When you journey down I-35 through Iowa those windmills that tower across the fields, coupled with solar energy, now provide half of the state's electricity. Kansas and North Dakota also produce half the amount of electricity consumed from wind and solar. While challenges remain in transmission systems and public policy, the growth in sustainable power sources is significant. The City of River Falls is a noted leader on this important effort to advance clean energy, and with its support First Congregational, St. Bridget's, and Ezekiel Lutheran have contributed to this *very* good news.

Boston Trip for Confirmands

We now have three years of confirmands who (hopefully) will be headed to Boston for their Big Trip at the end of their confirmation experience. We have tentatively set a date of April 21-24, the weekend after Easter, as the date for this trip. Later this fall we will set a meeting time with parents and confirmands to explore how this trip might take place. With kids sharing rooms and all the COVID uncertainty, there is lots of uncertainty, but please know we have not forgotten about this trip, its purpose and the hope that all of those who want to go, will be able to go. Stay tuned.

Back Bay Mission Spring Break Trip Cancelled

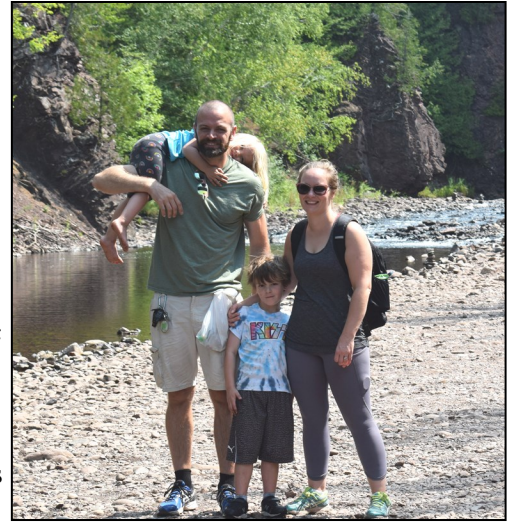
The Spring Break Mission trip was scheduled for March 12-19 to UCC related Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi. Last year's trip was cancelled due to COVID. And unfortunately we have made the sad, but realistic decision to cancel this year's trip as well. Between the astronomical cost of airfares (over \$650 per person, double what we normally pay), record high car rentals (over \$1000 per vehicle), still not having our church van and then of course COVID and people sleeping in two giant rooms, there are just too many uncertainties for us to go through with this trip at this time.

Our Youth Ministers, Alex and Sarah Plum are coming up with a summer mission trip opportunity for both old and young alike, likely either to the Pine Ridge Reservation or an inner city retreat to Milwaukee. Please look to the newsletter for updates about this important ministry. We will try to obtain a spot at Back Bay for next year's spring break.



People in the Pews: Jamie Mills

I grew up in Comstock, WI and went to school in Cumberland along with my brother and sister. (Yes, I was a huge marching band geek.) After graduating, I came to River Falls to attend college for Music Education. While in college, I occasionally attended First Congregational to sing in the choir and was even in Godspell one summer. My husband, Tim, and I officially joined the congregation about five years ago after we had our first child. We shopped around a bit, but deep down I knew UCC was my choice. I enjoyed the music – the soulful Glorias, Psalm responses, spirituals mixed with traditional hymns, and active choir. We also wanted to be a part of a church that was welcoming to all people, and truly felt UCC was an accepting community. We continue to come back for these reasons as well as the Sunday School and educational programs for our children.



Favorite Hymns: It is Well with My Soul, How Great Thou Art, In the Bleak Midwinter, O Love That Will Not Let Me Go, Come O Fount of Every Blessing (the Marsha Pearson version)

Favorite Bible passage: 1 Cor. 16:14: Let all that you do be done in love.

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.

Last quarter the church received over \$75 for this account, but that amount could grow greatly if you add the church to your Amazon account. Do it today!

Simpson Shelter Supply Needs

- Twin, full, and queen size blankets and sheet sets—new
- Pillows—new
- White t-shirts—new, sizes small & 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 Nov 7, 2021	Year to Date
General Fund Income *	\$ 8,050	\$ 400,534
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,262	\$ 416,190

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

Church Staff Contact Info

Pastor: Chris Myers—chris@firstchurchrf.org
Office: Missy Luedtke—missy@firstchurchrf.org
Education: Stacy Myers—stacy@firstchurchrf.org
Mission: Dave Ostendorf—dave@firstchurchrf.org
Youth: Alex and Sarah Plum—rfyouthgroup@gmail.com
Music: Jamie Mills—degolierjamie@gmail.com
Choir: Sarah Plum—sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com
Building: Dave Mountain—focusfan2001@yahoo.com
Maintenance: Tim Bylander—timthefixitguy@gmail.com



FIRST
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RIVER FALLS

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STAFF

Chris Myers, Pastor
Dave Ostendorf, Minister for Community and Outreach
Stacy Johnson, CE Minister
Missy Luedtke, Office Administrator
Joel Larsen, Moderator
Alex and Sarah Plum, Youth Ministers
Jamie Mills, Music Coordinator and Bell Choir Director
Sarah Plum, 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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NOVEMBER 15, 2021



First Communion Information for Parents

When do children at First Congregational Church begin taking Communion?

There is no uniform age at First Congregational Church when children begin participating in the Lord's Supper. Some children are pre-school age, others are in elementary school, and some wait until confirmation to begin taking Communion. The Bible and church history do not give decisive guidelines about the age to begin celebrating the Lord's Supper. The decision about when people are welcome at the Lord's Table has largely been made by local worshipping communities. Our practice is to include children when they and their parents think they are ready to participate.

How will I know when my child is ready?

Some parents choose infant communion for their children. Many parents wait until their children express an interest. Typically, children are ready to participate in Communion when they start asking questions about this sacrament. One important theme of Communion is inclusion: All are welcome at the table of the Lord. If a child feels excluded, it is a good time for that child to begin participating.

My child does not yet receive Communion. Should she/he still come forward?

Yes, all people are invited to come forward to the servers at the Communion distribution time. Children who will not be communing should keep their hands folded (as opposed to reaching out). This is a signal to the pastor and deacons that the child desires a blessing.

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."