

# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ [www.firstchurchrf.org](http://www.firstchurchrf.org)

March 15, 2022

*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

They had no hope. When they came to the tomb on Easter morning, those first followers of Jesus had absolutely no hope whatsoever that he would be alive. In just five days they watched how Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as a king on Palm Sunday, how he fed them on Maundy Thursday, how he washed their feet as their call to serve, and then how he was

brutally beaten and killed on a cross and died. So when they arrived at the tomb there was no hope, just resignation. And yet hope lived.

Holy Week and Easter are all about hope. Hope that death is not the end. Hope that love really is stronger than hate. Hope that life is stronger than death. Hope that God has some surprise in store for us and our world. Hope that Jesus really is who he said he was—a Savior. The One who has come to save us and our world.

Join us this Easter as together we celebrate the hope and joy of Holy Week and Easter. Join us to welcome the King on Palm Sunday waving your palms and shouting Hosanna! Join us on Maundy Thursday as he gathers us, feeds us and teaches us how to serve. Join us as the choir sings their beautiful Choral Cantata - Love Divine. Then join us for Easter worship and for breakfast served by our youth (reserve your spot!).

God is alive, hope abounds and we God's people are filled with joy as we gather together to celebrate the Holy Week and the good news of the resurrection. Join us and bring a friend.

Pastor Chris

## Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday Worship  
10:00 am

Maundy Thursday Worship  
6:30 pm

Good Friday Worship  
Choral Cantata at 6:30 pm

Easter Sunday Worship  
9:00 and 10:30 am

Easter Breakfast  
Served 8:00 to 10:15 am



## Easter Sunday

Join us on Easter Sunday from 8:00 until 10:15 am as our young people again serve the Easter Breakfast. This year's updated menu includes: eggs benedict, rosemary potatoes, sausage, biscuits and gravy, and homemade biscuits with apple, peach or blueberry toppings as well as french toast sticks for the kids. They will also serve orange and apple juice, milk and water, coffee and tea. We ask for a donation of \$8 per person which goes to our Youth Fund for mission trips and opportunities. Please sign up and bring a friend!

Easter Worship will be at 9:00 and 10:30 am with choir and communion. Join us!



## Sunday Lenten Worship Series: Now That's a Great Question!

Jesus asked a lot of questions. In the Gospels the first words he speak are in the form of a question. According to Luke when Mary and Joseph lose track of 12 year old Jesus in the Temple, are frantic with worry and find him teaching in the temple Jesus asks: why were you looking for me? Didn't you know it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house? And at the other end of Jesus' life, while on the cross, Jesus asks another question: My God, My God, why have you forsake me?

Jesus asks questions so that we might grow and be transformed. That's why he tells stories and parables. The goal is not just to give us information but to transform us and our world. Starting on Ash Wednesday and going through Holy Week and Easter Sunday we will explore a different question each week. These same themes will be explored on our Wednesday Evening Prayer Around the Cross worship services in the Fellowship Hall. Join us and bring a friend.

- Lent 4 Do you see this woman? Luke 7:44
- Lent 5 What must I do to inherit eternal life? Luke 18:18, Matthew 19:16
- Lent 6 What then shall we do? Luke 3:10
- Maundy Thursday Do you know what I have done for you? John 13:12
- Good Friday My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Matthew 27:46
- Easter Why do you look for the living among the dead? Luke 24:5

### 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

We are worshipping in the sanctuary and no longer require masks. Please continue to pray for our church leadership as they seek to find ways for us to gather both safely and faithfully.

### Wednesday Lenten Schedule

- With the arrival of Lent, our Wednesday church schedule changes slightly. Here it is:
- 3:45-5:15 pm—Wednesday School
  - 5:15-6:00 pm—Family Meals In Person (sign up!)
  - 5:15-5:45 pm—Family Meals Drive Thru (sign up!)
  - 5:45-6:30 pm—Bell Practice
  - 6:30-7:00 pm—Lenten Worship: Prayer Around the Cross; Confirmation Part One for Parents, Interns, Youth Group & Confirmands
  - 7:00-7:30 pm—Confirmation/Interns/Youth Group Part Two
  - 7:00-8:15 pm—Choir Practice

### Adult Forum

The Adult Forum discusses the Sunday's Bible texts prior to worship on Sunday mornings. The conversations focus on discerning context, asking questions, and considering what the text says to our lives and the world. Please come! All are welcome. The Adult Forum meets in the Youth Room, **Sunday mornings, 8:45-9:45 am.**

## Planning Your Good Funeral

In this world, the only thing that can be certain is...death and taxes. Hopefully you already have a good handle on your taxes (if not April 15 is coming soon!), but we at church can definitely help you with the first part. All of us will die. And a gift you can give your family is to plan your good funeral. Following up on a class Pastor Chris conducted back in 2019, on Sunday, May 22 from 8:45 to 9:45 am in the Fellowship Hall, Pastor Chris will again conduct a Planning Your Good Funeral workshop which involves for things:

**Planning:** Doing this work now is a gift we can give to our family. A helpful hand out will include a one-page document to fill out and give to your family.

**Your:** You get to help plan your celebration of life—how cool is that?

**Good:** There is such a thing as a good funeral –it is celebrative and involves tears and laughter

**Funeral:** Pastor will talk about the differences between Funeral, Memorial Services and Celebrations of Life

Mark your calendars and join us in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday, May 22.



### Easter Lilies

Easter Lilies are offered for you to honor or remember someone and grace our worship space with beauty. The lilies will be displayed on Easter morning and may be taken home following the 10:30 service. To order an Easter Lily for \$15, please fill out the form on the sign-up table and place in the offering plate or leave in the office. **Orders must be placed by April 10.** Proceeds go to our youth fund.

### Music at First Church Concert

On **Sunday, April 3, at 3:00 pm**, there will be a program of music including Gershwin and Porter in the sanctuary with a reception to follow in the fellowship hall. Performers are Maria Jette and Mary Jo Gothmann from the Twin Cities. Join us!

### Jean Hagberg Memorial Service

Please be advised that a Memorial Service for Jean Hagberg will be **Saturday, April 9** here at church. Details are still to be determined and will be shared when settled. Please keep Jean's family, including Jean's daughter and church deacon Traci in your prayers.

### Wednesday School Update

Each week elementary students gather after school for Wednesday School. The afternoon begins with a snack (always a highlight!), and continues with a brief lesson that includes a story and focus on Picture the Bible art. Children then may choose to build with Planko blocks or Legos or work on an art project. The afternoon ends by practicing the New and Old Testament raps and praying with Pastor Chris. In a recent lesson, children



discussed how artists use shape and color to convey ideas. After studying the work of artist Paul Klee (1879-1940), they children used shapes and colors to create their own cityscape.

Wednesday School would not be possible without the wonderfully faithful leadership of Jennifer Syverson, Erin Syverson, Christina Krueger, and David Reilly.





There are two wonderful adventures planned for this summer:

The **South Dakota Trip** will be to Pine Ridge reservation and include stops at Mt. Rushmore and the Badlands. The dates are **June 20-25** and cost should be about \$400. Scholarships will be available. Alex will have a flyer out soon with details. Sign up by April 25 through [rfyouthgroup@gmail.com](mailto:rfyouthgroup@gmail.com).

And we will have 2 groups headed to the **Boundary Waters July 17-21**. Leave Sunday afternoon, camp at Sawbill Lake, then enter the BWCA for 3 days, then back. No experience necessary! Cost should be around \$250. A flyer will be available soon with details. Sign up by April 25 through [rfyouthgroup@gmail.com](mailto:rfyouthgroup@gmail.com).

## Mortgage Summary—As of March 1

Original cost of Facilities Expansion Project	\$2,386,970.00
Remaining amount on Bank Loan	\$495,000.00
Cash on hand in the Building Fund	\$98,233.79
Interest Rate (Locked in through January 2027)	3.39%
Monthly Payment	\$2,622.76

## Adult Bible Study

Adult Bible Study meets **Wednesday afternoons, 1:00–2:30 pm** in the Youth Room. The group is reading *The Remarkable Ordinary* by Frederick Buechner. Copies are available in the church office for \$16.00. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

## Update: Afghan Resettlement in Eau Claire

While First Congregational Church hoped to welcome Afghan folks in need of resettlement to River Falls, the geography and size of our community were not conducive to achieving that goal. Instead, First Congregational and St. Bridget Catholic Church provided resources to support Afghan resettlement in our communities, including in Eau Claire. The balance of the financial support we provided was dedicated for a dental fund for refugees.

A group of churches and individuals in Eau Claire called “Welcoming New Neighbors” welcomed eight individuals from Afghanistan on February 16, 2022. Here is an update regarding their work:

- It is customary in Afghanistan to welcome guest with roses, so the group welcomed the Afghan arrivals at the airport with roses and a sign proclaiming “Welcome” in English and Dari.
- The new Afghan members of the Eau Claire community initially stayed at an area hotel until their permanent housing was ready. They arrived with only six days’ notice, so their housing plans had not been finalized. They were served lentil soup and naan bread, and baskets of snacks and fruit were in their hotel rooms.
- On the evening of their arrival, members of the Altoona mosque welcome the new neighbors and presented them with prayer rugs prior to shared evening prayer worship.
- The day after their arrival, each new neighbor was given a \$200 gift card to spend at Walmart to buy necessities. The shopping day included buying sim cards and new cell phones.
- In the following days, the new neighbors received support to navigate public transportation. They also began English language classes, received an employment skill assessment and job coaching through Workforce Development and CVTC. Volunteers are helping to facilitate relationships and introduced new neighbors to a Chippewa Valley Symphony concert.
- The group has already begun the considerable legal work required to navigate the US legal system.

As a congregation, we should be impressed by and grateful to the people in Eau Claire doing this important work. Their work truly shows neighborly love and discipleship in action.

Pastor Stacy



## Family Meals

Wednesday night we are offering our home-cooked meals. The cost is \$8 per person with a max per family of \$25. There is in-person seating in the Fellowship Hall or you can receive your meals 'to go' served drive thru in the back church alley (enter on Maple & exit on Elm Streets) between 5:15 and 5:45 pm. 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.

Mar 30—Baked pork chop, garlic mashed potatoes, red cabbage & cooked apples, bread

Apr 6—Meatloaf, baked potato, vegetable, bread—last meal of the season

## 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.



## Offering QR Code

1. On your mobile device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code
3. Click tab 'Give Online'



Please mark your calendars for the 2022 VBS. The theme is *Great Joy!* VBS dates are August 1-4, 2022, and will include a pre-pandemic format. We need lots of people: kids to participate, teens to help, and adults to guide students. Please register your children and your willingness to help at the links below, on the church website or on the sign-up table.

Volunteer sign-up link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-vbsvolunteers1>

VBS registration form link: <https://firstchurchrf.org/pages/sign-ups-forms>



## Care Givers Needed

The Church Care Team identifies shut-ins and senior friends and then matches other church members to visit them in their homes. It is a tangible way of making the love of Christ visible. Many wonderful friendships have emerged from these caring relationships. The Care Team is in need of a few more members who would be willing to be matched with a senior or shut-in. Please contact the church office to volunteer or the current Care Team Members (Jan Hansen, Jill and Merle Paulson, Vicki Hoffman, Kathy Wochomurka, Callie Trautmiller, Diane Welsh, Pastors Chris and Dave).

## Treasurer's Report

	Week of Mar 20, 2022	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,325	\$ 158,079
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,909	\$ 118,908

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

\*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

## Church Staff Contact Info

Pastor: Chris Myers—[chris@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:chris@firstchurchrf.org)

Office: Missy Luedtke—[missy@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:missy@firstchurchrf.org)

Education: Stacy Myers—[stacy@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:stacy@firstchurchrf.org)

Mission: Dave Ostendorf—[dave@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:dave@firstchurchrf.org)

Youth: Alex and Sarah Plum—[rfyouthgroup@gmail.com](mailto:rfyouthgroup@gmail.com)

Music: Jamie Mills—[degolierjamie@gmail.com](mailto:degolierjamie@gmail.com)

Choir: Sarah Plum—[sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com)

Building: Farnum Fuller—[farnumfuller@gmail.com](mailto:farnumfuller@gmail.com)

Maintenance: Tim Bylander—[timthefixitguy@gmail.com](mailto:timthefixitguy@gmail.com)

## Engaging the Word, Engaging the World...

### Upcoming

**Thursday, March 31, 6:00 pm, "Sustainability and Life."** Discussion on using native plants and how we can nurture life in our own backyards, featuring Diana Alfuth, UWRF Extension Horticulturist. In the Library Community Room or stream live through the RF Library Facebook and YouTube channel.

**Tuesday, April 5, 6:00–8:00 pm, "Solar Power: Bringing It Home," Fellowship Hall.** This Learning Community Gathering will provide homeowners anywhere in the area a "one-stop" opportunity to learn about home solar installation and solar power options. Solar installers will join River Falls Municipal Utility staff and current solar homeowners to provide information and experience in the process of putting solar on your home. If you're interested in going renewable, this is a Gathering you want to attend!

**Thursday, April 21, 6:00 pm, "The Mental Health Impacts of Our Climate Change."** Featuring Dr. Christie Manning, Director of Sustainability and faculty in the Department of Environmental Studies at Macalester College. Watch live through the RF Library Facebook and YouTube channel.

### Updating

**The Kairos Call to Action Newsletter** of the Creation Care Team is a great resource on the environment/sustainability work of UCC churches in Wisconsin, providing news, updates, and innovative actions being pursued by congregations across the State. Sign up for it at <https://www.wcucc.org/kairos-call-to-action/kairos-call-to-action-newsletter/>

**Among Friends is Back, Tuesdays at the Church!** Among Friends still seeks a part-time, paid Program Coordinator to assist its commitments with older adults with memory loss, and their caregivers, at its social respite program, meeting weekly. Since 2017 Among Friends has provided welcome support to many area families. Its staff and volunteers are recognized for their kindness and support for participants and their families. To learn more about this position contact Bonnie Jones-Witthuhn (715-307-1182) or Norma Revels (651-260-5725).

### Unfolding

**Earth Fest 2022, Sunday afternoon, April 24** is taking shape for Glen Park! Leaders from numerous organizations are working together with *Hope for Creation* members and partners to make the afternoon one of the biggest events of spring. There will be music all afternoon, food, booths and displays, electric vehicles, tree planting, games and other activities for children and youth... a great afternoon for everyone! See the posters in the Narthex and put the day on your calendar now!!

**May 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Mission Ed Committee will sponsor a "Mental Health First Aid" class**, a training for adults 18 and older, provided by St. Croix Valley United Way, and held in-person at the church from 6:00-8:45 pm. The course teaches skills to respond to signs of mental illness and substance use in adults. Costs of the course will be covered for church members by Mission Ed; participation is limited. Attending both nights and completing 2 hours pre-work online is required. The course can be used for continuing education with approval of an employer. Please sign up at the Narthex table by April 24. For more information contact Sally Steneman, [stenesal9@gmail.com](mailto:stenesal9@gmail.com)



## Because Sometimes You Just Need to Party

On **Thursday, July 7**, the church is hosting an epic kick off to River Falls Days Weekend: a pizza truck and a Bluegrass band out on the church lawn. Recognizing we all need something fun to look forward to at this time of the year and recognizing also how long this pandemic has dragged on, the Music Committee will be hosting a concert out on the church lawn with a local Bluegrass band providing the entertainment. Details closer as the date approaches. Mark your calendars!

## At 91, Barb de Souza Continues Her Ministry in Brazil

In January the people of the favela *Canal do Anil-Jacarepagua* welcomed Barb de Souza back to work with the family health clinic program she founded there more than twenty-five years ago. The NGO was the first to be recognized by the city health program, capping her forty years of work in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Barb's pioneering health education and training in the shantytown of the sprawling city of over 13 million has long been recognized for the profound impact it has made in the lives of countless women and their families, and for equipping an entire generation of health workers to serve poor residents.

On March 13, during a ceremony praising the care and leadership of the Association of Community Health Workers (AECS), it was announced that Barb will soon be honored as an Honorary Citizen of the Municipal of Rio de Janeiro, a rare recognition.

AECS has grown into an NGO (non-governmental organization) well-known for its health care education, training, and leadership. Today its Board of directors and trained men and women give courses and lead various health educational projects and activities serving countless residents.

Barb's health education and training work with women of the favela enabled her students to become "health multipliers," reaching out to and empowering women to take charge of their own lives. The small family health clinic she founded was eventually recognized and approved by the city's health system, and in the spring of 2016 a larger clinic to replace it was completed by the city and named in her honor, the *Clinica de Família Barbara Mosely de Souza*.

Barb's ministry is deeply rooted in First Congregational UCC of River Falls, and with its pastors, lay leaders, and supporters. She was ordained here in 1985 and in the '80s began serving in Brazil as a volunteer with American Friends Committee (AFSC) - a Quaker organization. In 1993 she became a missionary with the United Church of Christ Board of Global Ministries. She had previously served as a social worker for a local Catholic parish while serving with the AFSC in Brazil. In 2011 she returned to River Falls with her beloved husband, Gus de Souza, whose warm smile and singing still lingers among us after his death in 2019.

In 2017 Barb completed *When Sleeping Women Awake, Mountains Will Move*, a book of powerful stories of women whose lives and communities were deeply changed by their participation and leadership in the health education and training programs she created. A copy of the book is available in the church library.

In the coming weeks Barb will be back in River Falls to visit family and to complete plans for returning to Rio de Janeiro to carry out her ministry with the NGO which serves the large and growing low-income area of Canal of Anil. Her work there will be continued through the Brazil Fund, long-established at First Congregational UCC.

At 91 years of age, Barb de Souza faithfully persists!! Thanks be to God!!



## Relay for Life



Looking for something to do on April 1st that will make you feel good with your participation, try the Relay for Life event on **April 1, held at the River Falls High School**. This year's theme is "Around the World - a world without Cancer." This event allows the community to get together for a few hours to honor or remember loved ones and their caregivers affected by cancer. It's an opportunity to raise dollars for the American Cancer Society (ACS), who will use these funds for research and ways to help those affected by the illness. Our church has been involved in this event for many years and has raised more \$12,000.

Our team's first fundraiser was the Soup Night which raised over \$350. The last two Sundays of March, there was a Relay for Life team member in the fellowship hall for you to find out more information about the event, donate to the team total (which goes to ACS), or purchase luminaries. Luminaries are lunch bags decorated 'in honor of' or "in memory of" love ones affected by cancer. Each bags cost \$5 and the funds goes to ACS. The bags are used to decorate the River Falls High School gym railing and are lit up with Christmas lights for the Luminary lighting and the reading of the people honored and/or remembered at 9:30 pm.

The Relay for Life Event begins at 5:30 pm with the Spaghetti Dinner and then the Survivor Walk at 6:00 pm. Another fun activity at the event is the Silent Auction from 6:00-11:00 pm. Items are donated to the silent auction by the teams participating and other people/businesses of the community. Items range from baskets with themes like: chocolate, wine, movies, or bath items. Other items to bid on are tickets for area events, meals, crafts, golfing opportunities and sometimes outdoor furniture.

If walking around the gym is not your thing, there are also games going on, food and other items for sale in the lobby of the high school, fun music, and a wonderful chance to visit with friends and/or meet other people affected by the illness. The Relay event is truly a chance to help others and yourself, through sharing time with friends and raising funds to reduce the devastation of cancer.

To join our team google: Relay for Life Pierce County WI, sign in, (with your information), and tap on the join a team button. Our team is **1st Congregational Church**. For more information or if you want to donate, call or text Deb Hoffman, 612-308-4945. Thank you in advance for all your help and support.

A purple poster with white and yellow text and colorful Easter eggs. The text reads: "Volunteer for the Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt", "River Falls High School 818 Cemetery Road Saturday, April 9, 2022 10:30 am - 1:30 pm", "Putting treats into Easter Eggs", "Wellhaven Senior Apartments Dining Room 119 Union Street; River Falls Friday, April 8 @ 4:00 - 5:00 pm", and "For more info, text Rose at 715-781-7032".

**Volunteer for the Lions Club  
Easter Egg Hunt**

River Falls High School  
818 Cemetery Road  
Saturday, April 9, 2022  
10:30 am - 1:30 pm

**Putting treats into Easter Eggs**  
Wellhaven Senior Apartments Dining Room  
119 Union Street; River Falls  
Friday, April 8 @ 4:00 - 5:00 pm

**For more info, text Rose at 715-781-7032**

Please sign up to volunteer at the Easter Egg Hunt and Carnival using this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084BA8AA2AAAFD0-easter1>

## Church Scholarship Reminder

Church Scholarships are due in the office in paper form by **Sunday, May 1** and will be awarded on Graduation Sunday, June 5. Scholarships are available for graduating High School Seniors who wish to continue their education in college, vocations or tech schools. Continuing scholarships are available for those already in higher education. Letters of recommendation and/or essays are required.

Forms are available on the church website or via this link: <https://firstchurchrf.org/pages/sign-up-sheets>



## People in the Pews:

### Andy Krueger

1. *Where did you grow up?* I grew up on the east side of Wisconsin in a town called Clintonville. Clintonville is most known for the manufacturing facilities of Seagrave Fire Trucks and is the sole provider of fire trucks to New York City.

2. *Briefly introduce yourself.* I have been happily married to Christina for 34 years; we have two children, Joshua who is 31 years old, married, and lives in Phoenix, AZ, and Katie who is 24 and attending Logan College of Chiropractic following in

her grandpa and uncle's footsteps of improving the health life of many people. She currently resides in Chesterfield, Mo. I am currently the CEO of a restaurant company in the Twin Cities. If you are looking for me at church, you will more than likely find me in the kitchen, especially for the Easter and Thanksgiving meals.

3. *How long have you been attending First Congregational?* We have been members of First Congregational Church for over 15 years. I have been the chair of the trustees. I also was extremely involved in the planning and design of the new fellowship hall addition and the kitchen.

4. *What keeps you coming back to church here?* The people, the programs, and the peacefulness in an otherwise crazy world. Watching and listening to the continued optimism of the youthful Vikings fans that there is "always next year." Good luck with that!

5. *What is your favorite Bible passage, hymn and/or song?* My favorite Bible verse is Jeremiah 29:11. *For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you HOPE and a future.*

6. *What is your favorite childhood memory?* My favorite memory as child was the annual trips to Florida with my family. There is one particular year that we decided to drive to Florida for Christmas, so we loaded up the van, strapped a Christmas tree to the top of the camper and off we went. Long trip with a family of 6 in a van, but good memories none the less.

7. *What is your favorite hobby or pastime?* My favorite pastime and hobby is playing golf with my family. Both of the kids play golf at a high level, and we love to travel to new, sunny, warm locations to play new courses and spend some quality family time.

8. *Tell us something about you or your family that may surprise us?* We are very active in athletics. I have served locally on the youth basketball board. We also did not miss any of Katie's golf matches during her entire 7 year competitive golf career. When Katie was a senior at Concordia College, we actually attended every Concordia College men's hockey game. We also cooked and hosted a socially distanced graduation BBQ in Moorhead, MN for the hockey and golf teams. When the men's hockey team played UWRF here in River Falls, we hosted the Concordia Hockey team for a team meal and we will be doing the same for the Cobber women's hockey team later this year. We have also housed and hosted the women's college golf team when they played in the area. We continue to stay in touch with the Concordia athletic director, coaching staffs, players and their families and consider them all friends.

9. *What gives you comfort or joy during these Covid-19 days?* The fact that even though the pandemic has been going on far too long, and there are many varying opinions of the pandemic and the cause and solutions to it, this is not the first pandemic that the world has seen, and we will get it through it. The joy comes in the extra family time that I was afforded with my wife and family that I may not have had if the world hadn't slowed down.





## Church Softball News

It's that time of the year when the temperatures are getting warmer and the grass is getting greener that we think of fun outside activities like **SOFTBALL**. Once again our church will sponsor a softball team in the River Falls Church Family League. The family league is a co-ed division allowing players to play at the age 14. The league prefers players to be 14 years old for safety reasons and city league rules. The co-ed description requires teams to have three women on the field at all times, so ladies please don't be afraid to sign up and play. The games are played on Monday evenings at Hoffman Park. Games will begin around the end May and continue until the second week of August. Practices will begin in April. Come join in the fun and laughs.

If you are interested in playing on our team, please sign up on the softball signup sheet in the gathering area or online <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-church2>. If you have questions contact Matthew Thurston at (715) 781-3626 or Deb Hoffman at (612) 308-4945.

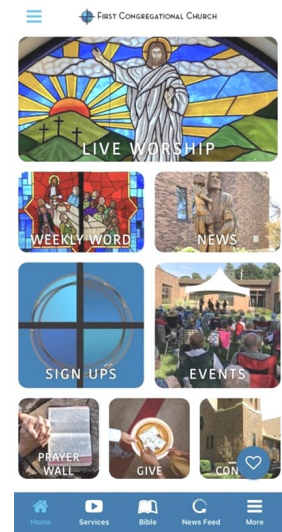


## Church App

The church has a mobile phone app. You can download it from the church website or by scanning the QR Code to the left (directions below). 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

*SERVE*  
*generously*

## Simpson Shelter 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!

## Save 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.

## Among Friends

Among Friends provides a social respite for individuals with dementia and their caregivers. They are open from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm every Tuesday here at the church.

## Ukraine Relief

Many of you are asking what you can do for the people of Ukraine. Please pray and please consider making a financial contribution to help them.

Pray for changed hearts. Pray for world leaders to find a way to peace. Pray for people fleeing violence that they may find safe places to stay. Pray for those opening their homes and schools and churches.

Please also consider making a financial contribution. Working through our partner church in Hungary, the Reformed Church, which borders Ukraine and has been housing refugees in houses and churches, we will regularly send financial support. Our first deadline was Monday, March 21 and we sent \$5,000. Our next deadline will be Monday, April 4. Thank you for your prayerful support.

## 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. You need to do two things for the church to receive this money. First, go to Amazon Smile by typing in [smile.amazon.com](https://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](https://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 \$100 for this account, but that amount could grow greatly if you add the church to your Amazon account. Do it today!

## 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.

## Empty Pill Bottles

The River Falls Lions Club is collecting empty pill bottles, both prescription and over the counter, to send to Africa where there is an urgent need. The bottles will be washed, and the labels soaked off before they are shipped. A blue collection tub is in the gathering area. Please see Carole Mottaz with questions.



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RIVER FALLS

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MARCH 15, 2022



## 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."